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MEET THE WAYFARER



14 DAYS
BOOK

CHRISTOPHER HARE

Dn 432.1

A



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DANTE THE WAYFARER

"Dante che tutto veda."

SACCHETTI, Nov. 114.

"Arriving only to depart,

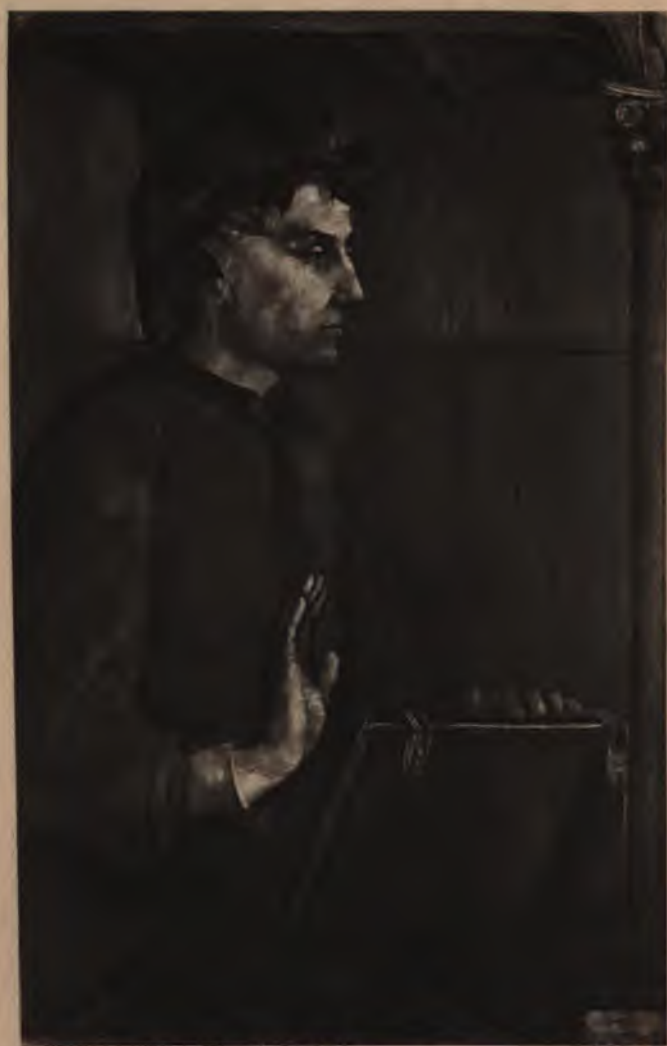
From court to court, from land to land,

Like flame within the naked band

His body bore his burning heart."

ROSSETTI.





After a contemporary of M. M. Brown, Stevens & Co.

John Rogers & Co.

Dante Alighiero.

From Portrait in the Louvre, by unknown Artist.

Italian School of the 14th Century.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

BY
CHRISTOPHER HARE

AUTHOR OF
"THE MOST ELEGANT LADIES OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE"
"FELICITA' : A ROMANCE OF OLD ROME," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1905



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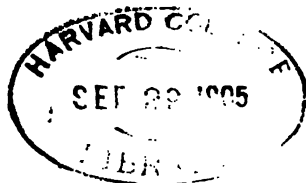
NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1905

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Danle Society.

PRELUDE

IT has been said of the *Divina Commedia* that it is like the Bible in this respect : every man finds within its pages that which answers to his need—the poet sees poetry, the scientific man science, the politician studies the tangled politics of the Middle Ages ; even the heretic has been known to discover heresy, and I, a wayfarer in Dante's fair land of Italy—I find in his great poem a marvellous record of travel.

Dante is in truth a master guide, and to follow in his steps is a supreme revelation. As he journeys through the land from city to city, over mountain and plain, across the valleys through marsh and forest, by many a classic river or on the lonely sea-shore, nothing escapes his piercing vision. Equipped with all the learning of his day, dowered with imagination so keen and vivid that it almost attains to second sight, Dante, the ideal pilgrim, passes sedately through a haunted world peopled with the spirits of the great departed—philosophers, emperors, musicians, poets, warriors, and dear dead ladies, some enshrined in purity, others frail as fair, wives and maidens, kings' daughters and holy

PRELUDE

nuns—meting out stern justice in his book of doom alike to saints and sinners.

Yet with these stupendous issues hanging in the balance nothing is too high, nothing too lowly for the poet's loving gaze. With clear precision of insight he describes all the varied incidents of travel, the passing glimpse of bird and beast, all sights and sounds which await him by the wayside ; each changing aspect of the heavens above in storm and sunshine, from the first awakening of dawn, when the stars fade away one by one, to the sunset glow and the lonely majesty of night.

The daily life of the wanderer is transformed by the poet's magic touch.

The unnumbered books already written on the works of Dante form a library in themselves, but it is not my ambition to add another philosophical or theological commentary to that mighty list. My aim reaches not to another world, but I am content to take Dante himself as my guide for an earthly pilgrimage ; following him through the ancient cities of Northern Italy from one refuge to another in his long exile, up the steep mountain path, by the river side, along many a by-way far from the busy haunts of men, where the world which the poet saw still lives unchanged after six centuries.

To stand where he stood, to look upon the scenes which met his eyes, seems to bring him very near us.

PRELUDE

as we realise with almost startling vividness the truth of his marvellous pictures.

Thus I have sought to follow step by step the poet of the *Divina Commedia*, telling in his own words the story of all the men and women he met by the way, and gathering together the legends which sprang up like flowers wherever his footsteps passed.



CHRONOLOGY

OF THE CHIEF HISTORICAL EVENTS DURING THE LIFE OF DANTE

- 1265. (May.) Birth of Dante at Florence.
- 1266. Battle of Benevento won by Charles of Anjou. Manfred defeated and slain. (February 26.) The Guelfs return to Florence. Exile of the Ghibel-
lines. Niccola Pisano works at Bologna and
Siena.
- 1267. All Tuscany, save Siena and Pisa, becomes Guelf.
Charles of Anjou in Florence.
- 1268. Charles of Anjou defeats Conradin, last of the
Hohenstaufen, at the battle of Tagliacozzo.
(August 23.)
- 1269. Siena defeated by Florence at the battle of Colle.
Provenzano Salvani slain. "Monna Sapia re-
joices."
- 1270. Fortifications of Poggibonsi destroyed by Florentine
Guelfs. Cino da Pistoia born.
- 1271. Pope Gregory X. succeeds Clement IV.
- 1273. Pope Gregory, Charles of Anjou, and the Emperor
Baldwin II. meet at Florence. Rodolph of Haps-
burg elected Emperor.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1274. Thomas Aquinas dies at Fossa Nuova.
- 1275. Ghibellines exiled from Florence.
- 1276. Florence and Lucca defeat Pisa at Fosso Arnonico
Gregory X. dies at Arezzo.
- 1277. Nicholas III. elected Pope.
- 1278. Ottocar, King of Bohemia. Niccola Pisano died.
Campo Santo at Pisa begun; also Santa Maria
Novella at Florence. Cardinal Latino sent as
peacemaker to Florence.
- 1279. Return of Ghibellines to Florence.
- 1281. Martin IV. (Simon of Tours) elected Pope.
- 1282. Sicilian Vespers. The Priori replace the Fourteen
Signori at Florence.
- 1284. Genoa defeats Pisa at Meloria.
- 1285. Pope Martin dies at Perugia.
- 1286. Famine in Florence and all Italy.
- 1287. War between Florence and Arezzo.
- 1288. Expulsion of Guelfs from Pisa. Imprisonment of
Count Ugolino in the Prison of Famine.
- 1289. Death of Ugolino, his sons and grandsons. Battle
of Campaldino. Siege of Caprona. (At both of
these Dante believed to have been present.)
Death of Buonconte da Montefeltro.
- 1290. The Tuscan Guelfs attack Arezzo. They destroy
Leghorn and the harbour of Pisa.
- 1291. Pisa takes fortress of Pontadera from Florence.
- 1293. Peace between Florence and Pisa. Pope Cele-
stine V.
- 1294. Charles Martel, son of Charles II. of Anjou, comes to
Florence. Pope Boniface VIII.
- 1298. Palazzo Publico begun in Florence.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1300. (Ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*.) Bianchi and Neri factions begin in Pistoia. Faction fights in Florence. Jubilee at Rome. Dante elected Prior. (June 15.) Guido Cavalcanti exiled with the Bianchi to Sarzana. Returns to Florence to die.
- 1301. Charles of Valois enters Florence as peacemaker. The Bianchi are banished.
- 1302. (January 27.) First sentence against Dante. (March 10.) Second sentence against Dante and fourteen others. (April 4.) Final expulsion of the Bianchi from Florence. The Neri under Moroello Malespina fight against Pistoia and capture Serravalle.
- 1303. Pope Boniface VIII, succeeded by Benedict XI. (The Ponte alla Carraia falls as Hell is acted there.) Dante at Arezzo. Petrarch born at Arezzo. (July 20.)
- 1304. Cardinal da Prato, unable to make peace at Florence, lays the city under an interdict. Great fire in Florence.
- 1305. Robert Duke of Calabria arrives in Florence as Captain-General.
- 1306. (August 27.) Dante at Padua. (October 6.) Dante at Sarzana. The Neri at Florence refuse the mediation of Pope Clement V.
- 1308. Death of Corso Donati. Flight of Podestà of Florence with the seal of the city.
- 1309. Charles of Naples succeeded by his son Robert. Again war between Florence and Arezzo. Henry of Luxembourg elected Emperor.
- 1310. The Florentines oppose Henry, who crosses the Alps and arrives at Turin.

CHRONOLOGY

1311. Henry is crowned in San Ambrogio at Milan with the iron crown of Lombardy. (Dante believed to have been present.) The Guelfs of Tuscany, with Florence, combine against the Emperor. He takes Vicenza, Cremona, and Brescia. The Empress Margaret dies at Genoa. (Dante in the Val d'Arno.)
1312. Henry at Pisa; then goes to Rome, is crowned in St. John Lateran, and leaves in haste. Lays siege to Florence. In October goes to San Casciano.
1313. The Emperor Henry dies at Buonconvento. (August 24.) The Pisans elect Uguccione della Faggiuola as their lord.
1314. The Pisans capture Lucca and sack the city. (September 18.) Can Grande della Scala is victorious over the Paduans, near Vicenza. Peace between the Aretines, Florence and Siena.
1315. Pisa and Lucca revolt against Uguccione. (November 6.) Last sentence passed by Florence against Dante and his sons.
1316. Uguccione made captain of the forces to Can Grande at Verona; Castruccio Castracane is made lord of Lucca. Count of Battifolle, King Robert's vicar, arrives in Florence.
1317. Florence makes peace with Pisa and Lucca. The house of d'Oria and the Ghibellines expelled from Genoa.
1318. Florence makes peace in Siena. Victories of Can Grande, who is chosen head of the Ghibelline league in Lombardy.
1319. King Robert leaves Genoa, and the Ghibellines besiege it. They lose Cremona and take Spoleto.

CHRONOLOGY

1320. Castruccio Castracane, now lord of Pisa, combines with the Ghibellines of Lucca to make war on Florence, and takes various strongholds. Can Grande is defeated before Padua, and Uguccione della Faggiuola is killed.
1321. Pisa becomes Ghibelline, and the Guelfs are defeated in Lombardy. Florence makes an alliance with Spinetta Malespina against Castruccio, but is defeated.
- Dante at Ravenna; sent on a mission by Guido Novello to Venice. He dies of fever in Ravenna, September 14.

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*The design on cover from drawing by Botticelli
in Berlin Museum*

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CHAPTER I
THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

"La bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma"
Conv. i. 321

**("The most beautiful and most famous
daughter of Rome")**

**"la gran villa
Sovra il bel fiume d'Arno"**

Inf. xxiii. 95
("The great city on Arno's fair river")

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CHAPTER I

THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

THERE is but one spot in all the world from whence we can begin the story of Dante's long wanderings, and that is Florence the Fair, the home around which centred all the deepest feelings of his nature. During his long years of exile he ever looked back to that city of his heart with the passionate longing of a mountaineer or an islander for his native land.

But the gay, prosperous city of to-day was very unlike the Florence of Dante—a small walled town mostly on the left bank of the Arno, full of lofty towers belonging to the nobles, with many churches, the Badia, the Bargello, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Borgo Sant' Apostolo, and the Mercato Vecchio. There were a few bridges across the Arno, of which the oldest was the Ponte Vecchio; then the wooden Ponte alla Carraja was built and the Ponte di Rubaconte, now called the Ponte alle Grazie. The thirteenth-century city was a strange medley of feudalism and commerce. The thatched houses of the burghers were squeezed in between the grim stone fortresses whose serried towers were a continual menace as they overhung the enclosed courtyards and crowded narrow streets below. These rival castles rather than palaces were the gathering

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centres in every civic battle. Strife was ever ready to break out; a word, a blow would be enough, and the ominous cry, "Accor'uomo!" would ring out; there would be a rush of armed men, barricades built up in the streets, crossbows aimed from the towers, fighting everywhere; then a sudden panic and perchance a fire, burning down the houses alike of Ghibelline and Guelf, of the Bianchi and the Neri, and reducing a whole quarter of the city to ashes.

When these party conflicts raged, there was no respect for person or property, even for that of the Republic. A certain tall and beautiful tower, the Torre del Guarda Morto, close to the Baptistery, was thrown down by the Ghibellines in the hope that it would crush the San Giovanni, which was only preserved by a miracle, as the old chronicler tells us. We may be thankful, indeed, that this precious relic of the past was saved for us, as around the ancient Baptistery, "il mio bel San Giovanni," cluster all the most interesting memories of Dante, although the time-worn font in which he was baptized was replaced in 1370 by the beautiful carved masterpiece of Giovane Pisano, and here each child of Florence has been received into the church since that day. The exquisite tower of the poet's friend Giotto near by, his eyes never beheld, and the little church of Santa Reparata stood on the site of the present Duomo, within whose walls is a curious memorial of the poet.

We find there a picture said to have been painted in 1455, by the desire of a monk who at that time lectured on the *Divina Commedia* within the cathedral itself. We see Dante clothed in a crimson gown, and holding in his hand an open book as he stands out-

THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

side the walls of Florence whose gates are closed against him. Close at hand is the abyss of the Inferno ; beyond rises the Mount of the Purgatorio crowned by the Tree of Life, while the Paradiso is dimly discerned in the circles around.

A stone was formerly pointed out near the cathedral as "*il sasso di Dante*," a neighbouring tower still bears his name, and not far off yet remains the palace of the Portinari where he first saw his Beatrice, and where his "*corner*" is still shown. The Ospedale of S. Maria Nuova was founded by Folco Portinari, the father of Beatrice ; and as we tread the streets of Florence, on every side we are surrounded by memorials of the past. We are shown the house where Dante was born, facing the Piazza San Martino, and the little church where tradition says that Dante was married to Gemma, sister of Corso Donati, chief of the Neri.

The very names of the streets carry us back to those bygone days, and on some moonlight night we should scarcely be surprised to hear the tramp of horsemen on the cobblestones, and to see Corso Donati and his companions in battle array riding down the *Via de' Neri* towards the Arno, or to catch sight of the low-born democrat, Pecora, with his little lantern, creeping stealthily round a corner of the *Via Guelfa*, on his way to collect the neighbours in a conspiracy against Peruzzi. Nay, why should we not meet Dante himself, in his close-fitting cap and long black robe, coming slowly up the *Via Ghibellina* towards the Badia ?

Of the poet's early life, all that we know may be thus briefly told. He was born in the month of May, in the year 1265, in that fair city of Florence, which

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was "built under the sign of Mars, rich and great owing to a mighty stream of sweet water, with a tempered climate sheltered from all hurtful winds."* He "was received into a paternal house of full smiling fortune," in the quarter of San Martino al Vescovo, and was baptized in the ancient Baptistery; "Il mio bel San Giovanni." His father, Alighiero, would seem to have been of a noble family, belonging to the Guelf party, and of his mother little is known save that her name was Bella. "In his boyhood he had liberal nurture and was put under teachers of letters, and at once gave evidence of the greatest genius . . . and gave himself not only to literature but to other liberal studies. . . . But for all this he did not shut himself up at ease nor sever himself from the world, but, living and moving about with other young men of his age, he approved himself gracious and skilful and valiant in every useful exercise."†

"In his youth he took the greatest delight in music and song, and with all the best singers and musicians of those times he was in friendship and familiarity; and many a poem was he drawn on by this delight to compose, which he then caused to be clothed in pleasing and commanding melody by these his friends." We have many proofs of this light-hearted joy in life, from Dante's sonnets and allusions in the *Divina Commedia*. He appears to have been skilled in all manly arts, and he shows a curiously minute knowledge of the noble sport of falconry.

Boccaccio relates the oft-told tale of his meeting with Beatrice Portinari, but our surest guide to that

* Dino Compagni.

† Bruni.

THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

ideal devotion which transfigured the life and work of Dante is to be found in his *Vita Nuova*. There we read of one "who was in so great favour among men that when she passed along people ran to behold her, whereof great joy came upon me. And when she drew near to any, such reverence came into his heart that he dared not lift his eyes nor return a salute. . . ." His love withdrew Dante's thoughts from all mean things (*Vita Nuova*, 13), and his cloistral spirit asked, for sole guerdon, the benediction of her greeting and the right to chant her praises. With what fervour and intensity of feeling does he tell how "the Lord of Justice called my most gracious lady to be glorious beneath the banner of that blessed Regina Maria whose name was ever so greatly revered by the saintly Beatrice."*

Or again, "On that day year since my lady had joined the citizens of eternal life, musing on her as I sat alone, I began to draw the likeness of an angel on my tablets."†

"You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—than read a fresh *Inferno*."‡

From his own writings we cannot fail to learn that he was versed in all the marvellous erudition of his age. In the words of Villani: "Dante was a great scholar in almost every branch of learning albeit he was a layman; he was a great poet and philosopher, a perfect rhetorician alike in prose and verse, a very noble orator in public speaking. . . ." He was familiar with old French and Provençal, and we find

* *V. N.* 29.

† *V. N.* 35.

‡ Browning.

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him quoting familiarly from Virgil, Horace, Lucan and Ovid. He was learned in dialectics, physiology, psychology, mathematics and the Ptolemaic system of astronomy in which he took the keenest delight.

He was a soldier also, if we accept the testimony of Leonardo Bruni. "In that great and memorable battle which was fought at Campaldino, on St. Barnabas Day, 1289, Dante, then a young man of good repute, bore arms and fought bravely on horseback in the front rank." Of this we shall hear more later on the battlefield itself. Some years after the death of Beatrice Portinari, he married Gemma di Manetto Donati, possibly the lady whose "pitiful eyes drew his heart to her in his great sorrow."* But she did not share his exile, and he makes no mention of the sons and daughters who were born to him, some of whom we shall meet hereafter.

It has been suggested that Dante had no love for home life, and was relieved to be free from domestic cares. But how can we reconcile that idea with the lingering tenderness which haunts his words in his many allusions to little children? Thus he speaks of the infant waking later than his wont and eagerly turning to his mother's breast:

"Non è fantin che sì subito rua
col volto verso il latte, se sì svegli
molto tardato dall' usanza sua. . . ."†

("Not a child so suddenly presses with his face
towards the milk, if he awake much later than
usual.")

* *V. N.* 36.

† *Par.* xxx. 82.

THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

And again :

“a guisa di fanciulla
che piangendo e ridendo pargoleggia.”*

(“After the fashion of a little child, who weeps
and laughs in wayward mood.”)

He thus speaks of the sweet trust in a mother's love :

“col rispetto
col quale il fantolin corre alla mamma,
quando ha paura o quando egli è afflitto.”†

(“The trust with which the little child runs to his
mother when he is frightened or in trouble.”)

“indì sorrese
come al fanciul si fa ch'è vinto al pome.”‡

(“Then smiled as one does to a little child who
is won by an apple.”)

“Quali i fanciulli vergognando muti
con gli occhi a terra, stannosi ascoltando
e sè riconoscendo, e ripentuti. . .”§

(“As children mute with shame, stand listening,
with eyes cast down, self-condemned and penitent.”)

Then he recalls the mother's loving ways to her child,
cheering him with her voice, or keeping watch with
patient heart-wrung compassion by the bedside of her
darling in his feverish delirium.

* *Purg.* xvi. 36.

† *Purg.* xxx. 43.

‡ *Purg.* xxvii. 45.

§ *Purg.* xxxi. 64.

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"mi volsi, come parvol che ricorre
sempre colà dove più si confida;
e quella, come madre che soccore
subito al figlio pallido ed anelo
con la sua voce che il suol ben disporre." *

("I turned like the little child, who always runs
for succour where he has most trust; and she was
like the mother who, seeing her son pale and
breathless, soothes him with her voice and he is
cheered.")

"appresso d'un pio sospero,
gli occhi drizzò ver me con quel sembiante
che madre fa sopra figliuol deliro. . . ." †

("After a sigh of pity, she turned her eyes toward
me with that look which a mother gives to her
delirious child.")

As we read this, we recall with a pang of sympathy
that Dante and Gemma are said by tradition to have
lost two little sons, Alighiero and Eliseo, from the
plague, that ever-haunting menace of a mediæval city.

As the ideal date of his great poem, Dante has
chosen the year of Jubilee, 1300. "Nel mezzo del
cammin di nostra vita."

In that year he was at the highest point of his worldly
success, the very crisis of his fate, had he but known
it; for within two brief years he found himself an
exile and a wanderer.

At the age of thirty-five he was elected to serve for
two months, probably from June 15 to August 15, as
one of the Priors—the most distinguished office in the

* *Par.* xxii. 2.

† *Par.* i. 100.

THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

Republic of Florence. To attain this dignity, it had been needful for him to enrol himself in one of the City Guilds, and he had chosen that of the "Arte dei Medici e Speziali." It is difficult to fancy Dante as a practical ruler, for he has been well described as an "ardent and impassioned doctrinaire, an inspired prophet standing outside existing factions, and clinging tenaciously to the dream which he had formed of a future state . . . which would restore the divine order of the world."

In the tangled politics of that day he had turned from the Guelf tradition of his family, and was looked upon as one of the Bianchi (a division of the Guelf party who joined the Ghibellines, while their opponents the Neri remained staunch Guelfs). The earlier strife of those hostile houses had become a "warfare of contending principles, and finally degenerated into the most meaningless faction fight that history has ever witnessed."

It was most unfortunate for Dante that he should have borne office during this most troublous time, when the city was distracted between the two rival parties; for while the Neri clamoured for Pope Boniface VIII. and Charles of Valois as his representative, the Bianchi were fiercely opposed to them. In the October following his two months as one of the Priori, he appears to have been sent on an embassy to Rome to protest against the papal policy, and it was in January 1302 that the ruling faction of the Neri obtained the first sentence of banishment against him. It is interesting to find that the names of those who were included in this condemnation are recorded for ever in the Statutes of the

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People; as banished by the Podestà, Cante de' Gabrielli of Gubbio, with the authority of the Commonwealth of Florence. Here we read :

“Dominum Palmerium de Altovitis de sextu Burgi
Dante Alleghieri de sextu Sancti Petri maioris
Lippum Becchi de sextu Ultrarni
Orlanduccium Orlandi de sextu Porte Domus.”

Two months later, on March 10, 1302, a still more severe sentence was passed on these four and also upon eleven other Bianchi, ordaining that if they fell into the power of the Republic they would be burnt alive.

Thus began the exile's long years of wandering, and never more did his longing eyes rest upon the city which, with all her faults, he loved so well. “Thou shalt leave all things that most tenderly are loved by thee, and this is the first shaft from the bow of exile.”*

* *Par.* xvii. 55.

CHAPTER II
FELLOW CITIZENS WHOM DANTE MET

**"From heaven his spirit came, and robed in clay
The realms of justice and of mercy trod,
Then rose a living man to gaze on God,
That he might make the truth as clear as day."**

MICHELANGELO.



A. W. Andrews

STATUE OF DANTE, FLORENCE

CHAPTER II

FELLOW CITIZENS WHOM DANTE MET

BEFORE setting forth with the poet on his long and weary wanderings through the land of Italy, it will be interesting to make acquaintance with a few of his fellow citizens whom he has immortalised in the *Divina Commedia*. Dealing only with the present, and the lifetime of Dante, we pass over the great roll-call of past noble Florentine families, of whom, on meeting him in the *Paradiso*, his crusading ancestor Cacciaguida chants at once the eulogy and the requiem.

Our concern is with the men and women who were his companions on earth, and whose picture he draws with a few vivid touches in the *Divina Commedia*. Taking them in order, he first meets among the Wrathful, in Circle V. of the Inferno, a certain Filippo Argenti,* who is supposed to have been so named because on one occasion he had his horse shod with silver. He was a man of very savage temper, and even when Dante finds him in the thickest slime of the Styx, he is having a furious and gruesome conflict. He was a bitter foe of the poet, who on this occasion certainly has the last word.

* *Inf.* viii. 61.

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He next discerns among the suicides in Circle VII. of the Inferno, a Florentine judge of his acquaintance, one of the Guelf party who was Prior in 1285. His name was Lotto degli Agli,* and it is related of him that, after delivering an unjust judgment, he returned to his home and hanged himself. Dante is very severe on those who lay violent hands on themselves, and their punishment is to become trees, and suffer torture when the Harpies feed upon their leaves. Thus does Nemesis overtake the cowards who flee through a forbidden door from pain and peril.

As Dante passes farther along, by a high embankment, he sees a crowd of souls below, and one of them recognises him and seizes the skirt of his robe. It is Ser Brunetto Latino, a notary of Florence and a very learned man, often spoken of as the master of Dante, but if this is more than doubtful, he was at least an ardent student of Latino's works. They are painted together on the wall of the Bargello, in the fresco attributed to Giotto. Dante bends down towards him and inquires :

“ ‘Siete voi qui, Ser Brunetto?’
E quegli : ‘O figliuol mio, non ti dispiaccia
se Brunetto Latini un poco teco
ritorno indietro, e lascia andar la traccia.’ . . .
Ei cominciò : ‘Qual fortuna o destino
anzi l’ultimo dì quaggiù ti mena?
e chi è questi che mostra il cammino?’
‘Lassù di sopra in la vita serena,’
rispos’ io lui, ‘mi smarri’ in una valle

* *Inf.* xiii. 123.

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avanti che l'età mia fosse piena. . .
 è riducemi a ca per quella calle.'
 Ed egli a me: 'Se tu segui tua stella,
 non puoi fallire al glorioso porto,
 se ben m' accorsi nella vita bella;
 E s'io non fossi sì per tempo morto,
 veggendo il cielo a te così benigno,
 dato t'avrei all' opera conforto. . .'
 'Se fosse tutto pieno il mio dimando,'
 risposi lui, 'voi non sareste ancora
 dell' umana natura posto in bando;
 chè in la mente m'è fitta, ed or mi accora,
 la cara e buona imagine paterna
 di voi, quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
 m'insegnavate come l'uom s'eterna;
 e quant'io l'abbia in grado, mentre io vivo
 convien che nella mia lingua si scerna.'"^{*}

("Are you here, Ser Brunetto?' And he replied:
 'O my son! let it not displease thee, if Brunetto
 Latino turn back with thee a little, and leave his
 companions to go on. . .'. He began: 'What
 chance or destiny brings thee ere thy last day, down
 below? and who is this who shows thee the way?'
 'There above, in the serene life,' I answered, 'I
 lost myself in a valley before I had attained my full
 age. . . . He guides me home again by this path.'
 And he to me: 'If thou follow thy star, thou canst
 not miss at last a glorious haven, if I discerned
 rightly in the beautiful life; and if I had not died
 so early, seeing heaven so kind to thee, I would
 have given thee encouragement in thy work. . .'.

"If all my desire were fulfilled,' I answered him,

^{*} *Inf.* xv. 30.

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'you had not yet been banished from human nature : for in my memory is fixed, and there lives in my heart, your dear kind paternal image, when in the world, from hour to hour, you taught me how man may win eternity ; and whilst I live, my tongue is bound to show my gratitude for it.'")

They continue to converse, and finally Brunetto urges him to study his great work, *Il Tesoro*, otherwise called the *Livre dou Tresor*.

This learned work was a kind of encyclopædia of natural science, history, rhetoric, ethics, and politics, written in French.

"Let my *Tesoro*, in which I still live, be commended to thee, and I ask no more."* A few minutes before, he told Dante that he might have seen in the same region of the Inferno another acquaintance. "He who by the Servant of servants was translated from the Arno to the Bacchiglione."† He refers to Andrea de' Mozzi, of a noble Florentine family, bishop of Florence for eight years, until in 1295 he was translated to the See of Vicenza. It was during his rule that the church of Santa Croce was founded, and also the Ospedale of Santa Maria, by his friend Folco Portinari, the father of Beatrice.

It is with a sense of relief that we turn from those gloomy shores where hope is left behind, and arrive beneath the Mount of Purgatory wherein the poet has placed some of his dearest friends. The first to make himself known is Casella, the sweet musician, and the description which follows is one of the most exquisite touches in the *Divina Commedia*.

* *Inf.* xv. 119

† *Ibid.* xv. 112.

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It was dawn on that bank from whence never man returned to earth, and the sea rippled under the breath of morning, when Dante became aware that a vessel was drawing near whose white sails were the wings of the angel of God. On the stern stood the celestial pilot, and the spirits under his care sang together with one voice : " In exitu Israel de Egitto." *

They land upon the unknown shore, and ask the way, amazed to see that Dante is still alive ; then one appears to recognise him :

" Io vidi una di lor trarsi davante
per abbracciarmi con sì grande affetto,
che mosse me a far lo simigliante.
O ombre vane, fuor che nell' aspetto ! . . .
Soavemente disse ch'io posasse ;
allor conobbi chi era e'l pregai
che per parparmi un poco s'arrestasse.
Risposemi : ' Così com'io t'amai
nel mortal corpo, così t'amo sciolta ;
però m'arresta ; ma tu perchè vai ?'
' Casella mio, per tornare altra volta
là dove son, fo io questo viaggio. . . .
. . . Se nuova legge non ti toglie
memoria e uso all' amoroso canto,
che mi solea quetar tutte mie voglie,
Di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto
l'anima mia, che, con la sua persona
venendo qui, è affannata tanto.'
' *Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,*
cominciò egli allor sì dolcemente,
che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona.

* *Purg.* ii. 46.

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Lo mio maestro ed io e quella gente
ch'eran con lui parevan sì contenti,
come a nessun toccasse altro la mente.
Noi eravam tutti fissi ed attenti
alle sue note ; ed ecco il veglio onesto,
gridando : Che è ciò, spiriti lenti ?
Qual negligenza, quale stare è questo ?
Correte al monte a spogliarvi lo scoglio,
ch'esser non lascia a voi Dio manifesto. . . .'
Così vid' io quella masnada fresca
lasciar lo canto, e gire in ver la costa,
come uom che va, nè sa dove riesca ;
Nè la nostra partita fu men tosta." *

(" I saw one of them (the spirits) draw forward to embrace me with such great affection, that it moved me to do the same. O shades ! empty save in outward show ! . . . Gently he bade me desist from my vain endeavours to embrace him ; and then I knew who he was, and begged him to tarry awhile and speak to me. ' O my Casella, I am taking this journey that I may be able to return after death to this place. . . . ' Then he continues, ' If no new law deprives thee of memory and skill in that song of love which in days gone by was wont to soothe all my passions, may it please thee now to comfort awhile my spirit, which is so sorely troubled at coming here with the mortal body.' ")

Casella at once complies :

(" ' O love that with my soul doth converse hold,' he began so sweetly, that the soft melody still resounds within me.")

* *Purg.* ii. 76.

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This is the first verse of a Canzone of Dante, which probably Casella had set to music.

("My master (Virgil) and I, and those spirits who were with him, appeared to be as delighted as if no other care or thought occupied their minds. We were all standing motionless and eagerly drinking in every note, when lo! the old man venerable, Cato, came upon us crying out: 'What is this, ye laggard spirits? What means this negligence, this halting by the way? Hasten to the mountain, there to get stripped from your eyes those scales which still suffer you not to behold God manifest.'")

The spirits all hasten away, like a flock of startled doves.

("Thus did I see that newly arrived company turn instantly away from the singing, and flee towards the hillside, like one who goes, but knoweth not where he may come forth; nor was our departure one whit less prompt.")

Passing onward through the Antipurgatorio, and seeking a way to ascend the Mount of Purgation, Dante meets the spirit of one who had so much concern with the story of his Italy that we cannot omit to mention him.

"Io mi volsi ver lui, e guardail fiso :
biondo era e bello e di gentile aspetto ;
ma l'un de' cigli un colpo avea diviso. . . .
Poi sorridendo disse : ' Io son Manfredi,
nepote di Costanza imperadrice ;
ond' io ti prego che quando tu riedi,

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Vadi a mia bella figlia, genitrice
dell' onor di Cicilia e d'Aragona,
e dichì il vero a lei, s'altro si dice." *

("I turned towards him and looked at him attentively; he was fair-haired, beautiful, and of noble aspect; but a gash had divided one of his eyebrows. . . . (He shows his two mortal wounds) then said he with a smile, 'I am Manfred, grandson of the Empress Constance; wherefore I pray thee when thou returnest (to the world), to go to my beautiful daughter, mother of the honour of Sicily and Aragon, and tell her the truth—(that thou hast seen me in a state of salvation), in case the contrary is said of me'—(that having been excommunicated by the Church, my soul is amongst the Lost). Then he tells how in the hour of agony he made his peace with God.")

This Manfred, King of Sicily, was defeated and slain by Charles of Anjou, at the battle of Benevento. There is a quaint tradition that, on the morning of the battle, Charles sent this message to Manfred:

"Allez ditez pour moi au Sultan de Nocera, qu'aujourd'hui je mettrai lui en Enfer, ou bien, il mettra moi au Paradis."

They are both placed in the Antipurgatorio by the writer of the *Divina Commedia*.

Dante and Virgil proceed on their journey, and the ascent of the Mount being very difficult and toilsome, the poet is encouraged by the promise of rest at the summit, when suddenly a voice near remarks: "Forse

* *Purg.* iii. 106.

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che di sedere in prima avrai distretta."* ("Perchance before thou reachest thither, thou wilt first have need to sit down.")

The travellers look round and see a great rock, under the shadow of which some are resting from mere sloth. Here Dante meets a Florentine friend of his, who was noted in life for supreme laziness, and recognises him at once, probably from his drawling speech.

"Conobbi allor chi era; e quell' angoscia,
che m' avacciava un poco ancor la lena,
non m' impedì l'andare a lui; . . .

Gli atti suoi pigri e le corte parole
mosson le labre mie un poco a riso;
poi cominciai: 'Belacqua, a me non duole
di te omai; ma dimmi, perchè assiso
quiritta sei? attendi tu iscorta,
o pur lo modo usato t'hai ripreso?' "†

("Then knew I who he was, and the labour which still quickened my breath did not prevent my going to him; and as soon as I was near he barely raised his head. . . . His lazy movements and curt sentences brought a smile to my lips, and then I began: 'Belacqua, I see now that henceforward I need not make myself uneasy about thee; but tell me, why art thou sitting on this spot? Art thou waiting for an escort, or is it only that thy wonted habits have seized upon thee?'")

Belacqua answers by confessing the sin of his tardy death-bed repentance. He was a citizen of Florence,

* *Purg.* iv. 98.

† *Purg.* iv. 115.

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who manufactured the necks of lutes and guitars, and was the most indolent man who ever lived. There is a story told of him * that once, when he was sitting idly as usual in his workshop, and was reproved for his laziness, he made answer in the words of Aristotle: "Sedendo et quiescendo anima efficitur sapiens." ("By sitting down and resting the soul is rendered wise.") Whereupon came the sharp retort: "Truly if by sitting down one becomes wise, none was ever so wise as thou."

Continuing on his way through the Purgatorio, Dante reaches the VIth circle—the abode of gluttonous souls, wasted and hollow-eyed. Presently one addresses him, whom he recognises by his voice for his old friend Forese Donati, the brother of Corso, and Piccarda. He explains that he has advanced so far in his expiation through the prayers of his dear wife.

"Ed egli a me: 'Sì tosto m'ha condotto
a ber la dolce assenzio de' martiri
la Nella mia col suo pianger dritto;
Con suoi preghi devoti e con sospiri
tratto m'ha della costa ove s'aspetta,
e liberato m'ha degli altri giri.
Tant'è a Dio più cara e più diletta
la vedovella mia, che molto amai,
quanto in bene operare è più soletta. . . .'"†

("And he to me: 'I have been led thus soon to drink the sweet wormwood of affliction by my Nella with her flood of tears, by her devout prayers and

* Anonimo Fiorentino.

† *Purg.* xxiii. 85.

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by her sighs has she brought me from the borders where they wait, and has set me free from the other circles. In the sight of God, so much more precious and beloved is my dear widow, whom I loved so well, for that she is the more alone in her good works. . . .')

And he contrasts the sweetness and devotion of his Nella with the evil fashions of other Florentine women. Little more appears to be known about this gentle lady, but her memory is enshrined for ever in the fair company of Dante's devout and holy women.

Still conversing together, the friends continue the ascent, and the poet recalls the worldly life which they led together, and tells how he was rescued, and his marvellous journey with Virgil as his guide. He then inquires after Forese's sister.

"Ma dimmi, se tu 'l sai, ov' è Piccarda?' . . .

'La mia sorella, che tra bella e buona
non so qual fosse più, trionfa lieta
nell' alto Olimpio già di sua corona.'*

("But tell me, if thou knowest, where Piccarda is?' . . . 'My sister—I know not whether she were more beautiful or good—she now triumphs rejoicing already in her crown on high Olympus.'")

Later on, when under the guidance of Beatrice, Dante has risen far above the shadows of the Purgatorio to the joyous light of Paradise, a gentle shade comes forward to meet him with smiling eyes, and reveals herself as Piccarda.

* *Purg.* xxiv. 10.

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("To every heart which the sweet pain doth move
And unto which these words may now be brought
For true interpretation and kind thought,
Be greeting in our Lord's name, which is Love. . . .") *

To which Guido replied in another sonnet, wherein he interprets the dream of Dante. It begins: "Vedesti al mio parere ogni valore," as Dante quotes in the *Vita Nuova*, and continues: "And indeed it was when he learned that I was he who had sent those rhymes to him that our friendship commenced." †

Guido wrote many sonnets, canzoni and ballate; several of them in praise of his fair lady, Giovanna, of whom Dante thus speaks in the *Vita Nuova*:

"I saw coming towards me a certain lady who was very famous for her beauty, and of whom that friend whom I have already called the first among my friends had long been enamoured. This lady's right name was Giovanna; but because of her comeliness (or at least it was so imagined) she was called of many Primavera, and went by that name among them. Then looking again, I perceived that the most noble Beatrice followed her. And when both these ladies had passed by me, it seemed to me that Love spake again in my heart, saying: 'She that came first was called Primavera, only because of that which was to happen this day. . . .' [as being first seen"]. ‡

This Guido and another poet, Lapo Gianni, who was a notary in Florence, were both united in such intimate friendship with Dante, that in one of his

* Translated by Rossetti.

† *Vita Nuova*, 3.

‡ *Vita Nuova*, 24.

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sonnets he wishes that they might all three sail away together and be wafted out to sea, each with the lady of his choice. It begins :

"Guido, vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io
Fossimo presi per incantamento,
E messi in un vascel, ch'ad ogni vento
Per mare andasse a voler vostro e mio. . . ."

("Guido, I wish that Lapo, thou and I,
Could be by spells conveyed, as it were now
Upon a barque, with all the winds that blow
Across all seas at our good will to hie.") †

Guido Cavalcanti threw himself ardently into the faction feuds of Florence, on the side of the Bianchi. Corso Donati made an attempt to assassinate him, and was wounded by Guido in a street fight. To put an end to these incessant hostilities, the Priors in 1300—of whom Dante was one—banished the leaders of the Neri to Castel del Pieve; while Cavalcanti and other Bianchi were sent to Sarzana in the Lunigiana. Here Guido caught the malaria of which he died in August the same year, after his recall to Florence. The biographers of Dante consider that this leniency in permitting the return of his friend prepared the way for his exile as a partisan of the Bianchi.

Although Guido died in 1300, the ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*, we do not find him mentioned in that record of the departed. In the *Inferno*, among the Epicureans and Sceptics, Dante meets the father of his friend, who eagerly inquires if his son Guido still

* Sonetto I.

† Translated by Rossetti.

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lives ? After some delay, he is told : "che il suo nato è co vivi ancor congiunto" ("his child is amongst the living").*

Is it possible that we may find a reason for this in the poet's warm affection for his early friend ? With his stern sense of justice, he may have felt that he dared not place this gallant hot-tempered poet and warrior amid the saintly spirits in Paradise, and yet he shrank from passing sentence on one whom he loved so well ?

* *Inf.* x. lxx.

CHAPTER III
TRAVEL IN THE MIDDLE AGES

“Through nearly all the places to which this language extends I have gone as a pilgrim, almost a beggar, displaying against my will the stroke of fortune.”

Conv. i. 3.

CHAPTER III

TRAVEL IN THE MIDDLE AGES

"PEREGRINO, quasi mendicando!" What a lurid light those words cast upon the lonely wayfaring of the exiled Dante. In far other guise had he taken more than one journey in bygone days, as ambassador for his proud Republic, with a stately escort of men-at-arms, of trumpeters with emblazoned coats, and above all the red lily banner of Florence floating in the wind. As a gallant knight he has ridden forth in battle array with a brave company, amid all the clamour and pomp of an army on the march. He tells us of "horsemen moving camp and commencing the assault, and holding their muster, and at times (alas!) retiring to escape. Coursers have I seen upon your land, O Aretines, and the march of foragers, the shock of tournaments and race of jousts"; and all the warlike ring of martial music, trumpets, bells and drums:

"Quando con trombe, e quando con campane,
con tamburi e con cenni di castella," *

Or again, when fortune smiles, he may ride in the gay company of some great lord, such as Count Guido,

* *Inf.* xxii. 7, 8.

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or Uguccione della Faggiuola, with musicians and jesters to beguile the way, and a goodly following of huntsmen with their hounds, and falconers with haggards on their wrists.

Those were palmy days indeed, when the great noble and his courtly train, guarded by an armed escort, passed boldly along the perilous highway, secure from lurking brigands. There was no fear lest they should go hungry, for if provisions of all kinds were not freely forthcoming, my lord would seize with a high hand all that was needful from farm or village. At night he and his attendants would find shelter in some hospitable abbey, or within the strong walls of a friendly castle.

“High placed in hall, a welcome guest.”

But save as a most rare episode, such easy travel was not for Dante. During the long weary years of his exile, he shared the common lot of wayfaring men in those grim mediæval days.

It is no easy matter for us to go back in imagination through six centuries of the world's history, and picture to ourselves what a journey through Italy, as a “peregrino, quasi mendicando,” meant early in the fourteenth century. The roads, if we may dignify them by such a name, were few and far between. The main highway between one city and another was often little more than a rough bridle-path, a quagmire of mud after the winter storms, overgrown in places with briers, and often passing through a thicket or jungle of crowded trees, which might serve as a hiding-place for outlaws or thieving vagabonds, and was by no means secure from wild beasts. Then, if these were safely passed,

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there were marshes to cross, as in the Val di Chiano and the Maremma of Tuscany, so poisonous and deadly, above all in summer—the month of August Dante specially mentions—that men would sicken and die there in a few hours.

In the early spring-time, the floods had to be reckoned with, for when the mountain snows melted, the many streams and rivers overflowed their bounds and laid waste the fertile valleys, making them useless save for coarse hay. At such times the fords were impassable, and the traveller was fortunate indeed if he came across a ferry-boat, or if the highway led to a rude bridge built by some pious soul as a deed of charity. At the entrance, by the corner of the road, there would frequently be a little chapel and cell where the hermit dwelt, who was supposed to look after the bridge, and who lived on the charity of the passer-by. Nor was this the only claim upon the pilgrim, whose way was barred every few miles, for a toll was exacted from him as he entered each new state, with its own laws and government, its customs and its coinage, and even its change of dialect. We remember how, in the world beyond the grave, Dante is always recognised by the spirits as a Tuscan.

It is curious to note how scarce money was at that time amongst the serfs and peasants, who paid all their dues in kind, if possible. Even rent was constantly compounded for in this way, for we are told * from old account-books that a Florentine nobleman of the time would receive :

* For a farm of 4 acres Twelve days of work in a year.

* Karl Fedem.

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- "A farm of 12 acres . Albergaria (the right of the lord, and duty of the tenant to lodge and feed a certain number of men for a certain time), six denari (silver coin), and two hens.
- "Rent for one farm . One hog, one lamb, and fifty-two days of work and Albergaria.
- "Rent for another farm Four soldi (gold coin). Work in vineyard, or at landlord's need. Four hens, four loaves of bread, Albergaria, and an 'adjutorium' to be paid every third year."

If a peasant wished to consult a doctor for his ailments, or to obtain advice from a man of law concerning a quarrel with a neighbour, he would take a few fowls in his hand, or send a measure of corn or a flagon of his own wine, or make larger payment with a pig or a calf, or even promise so many days' work in the field or the vineyard. There is little doubt that the gate and bridge tolls were chiefly paid in this way by poor travellers: the pedlar with some trifle from his pack, the quack-doctor from his nostrums or elixirs; while the wandering friar and the pilgrim would often go free, in the full confidence of the tax-collector that such almsgiving would be set down to his final account by the recording angel.

If the way of the traveller was full of hardships in time of peace, it was ten-fold worse when the land was desolated by war. We read:

"Whoever should venture upon his way beyond the walls of any city, had death or capture before his eyes, and the brushwood and brambles were making the

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very roads indistinguishable from desolate forests and marshes, while the whole face of the provinces rang with the trumpet sounds of war. Within the fortresses and the open cities there was nought but constant watching by night and clang of arms by day, and Mars alone claimed every power for his own." *

The fields were laid waste, a woeful sight to look upon; the harvest that the wretched peasants had gathered into their houses was carried away from them, and they crowded into the cities, where they suffered such dire poverty that they were thankful to perform the most servile offices for the citizens, who themselves were starving with empty granaries.

Even when there was no great war, and the country was not overrun by foreign mercenaries, there was a constant state of feud between hostile states and rival lords. Sometimes it was a law-suit which began it, as in the case of the episcopal Sees of Siena and Arezzo, who both claimed the suzerainty of certain parishes. After a while, the two cities took up the dispute, which lasted from the beginning of the eighth century until the thirteenth. In vain did the Church command all men to refrain from quarrels and hold a truce from Saturday until Tuesday; such well-meant laws were of no avail, and men defied all authority, human and divine.

From one cause or another, all sorts and conditions of men were to be found upon the road. As a French writer † remarks: "Dante s'est joint aux cortèges de pèlerins, aux groupes de mendiants aveugles; il a partagé l'abri des moines errants. Ces moines errants,

* Gest. Hen. xi. 1.

† Faure.

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ces pèlerins voyageurs enveloppaient ce vieux monde d'un réseau de prière et de pensée."

We will consider first the wandering friar. He is probably a Franciscan, going barefoot in rough coarse garb, girt with a cord, for by the rule of his Order he is bound "to be clad in mean habits and may blessedly mend them with sacks and other pieces," yet the friars are expressly warned not therefore to take credit for themselves and carp at men they may meet in rich attire. They were to go afoot, never riding "save by manifest necessity or infirmity." They must beg for their daily bread, but take only food and not money; "they shall go in confidence to beg alms like pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving our Lord in poverty and humility."

Such was the high intention of the founder, but every student of the Middle Ages knows how far short performance fell of precept. There were holy men amongst them, but too often the mendicant friar could not be distinguished from any common vagabond. And yet so great was the veneration in which the Order of St. Francis was held that, "however contemptible the man, you could not be sure that he had not the keys of heaven."

Boccaccio tells a story of one of these friars who used to visit Certaldo, Fra Cipolla by name, a little red-haired man of a merry countenance, the jolliest rascal in the world. Though no scholar, he was of a most ready wit and voluble tongue . . . and knew everybody in the neighbourhood. He promises to show a most precious relic to any one who will give him a little money—it being nothing less than one of the feathers of the angel Gabriel . . . "and the blessed

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St. Anthony shall take under his care all your oxen, sheep, asses and other cattle, if you pay your yearly due." . . . He tells them the most marvellous tales and declares himself willing to take any jewels or silver, and release them from any vows.

Somewhat akin to this artful knave were the vagrant doctors or herbalists of the cross-ways, who cunningly advertised their wares and professed to cure all maladies. They professed, of course, to be quite disinterested, and to offer their nostrums for the public good, as is the way of all quacks. Thus a charlatan of Venice, described in "The Fox," by Ben Jonson, boasts of his marvellous panacea, "which cardinals and grand dukes have bought of him for a thousand crowns," but the poor shall have it for a few pence. "He has also a little of the powder which gave beauty to Venus and to Helen of Troy; a great traveller, a friend of his, found it in the ruins of Troy. . . ."

Another Italian mountebank is described as selling "oils, sovereign waters, apothecary drugs . . ." and a preservative against poison. "He held a viper in his hand and played with its sting, making us believe that it was descended from the viper which leapt out of the fire on to St. Paul's hand in the island of Melita."

In contrast to the friars were the "jongleurs" and wandering minstrels, whose business was only to amuse and not to edify. They were always on the road, with a merry heart ready to "jog along the foot-path way"; always welcome and received with high favour in castle hall and wayside inn, and wherever men flocked together, in fair or market-place. They

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came as a glad break in the dull round of life in those days, with their romances of love and war, their ballads sung to the music of tabor, viol or lute ; often varied by wild snatches of local interest composed for the occasion.

Of the many travellers on the highway, perhaps the most important were the merchants, who joined together in a trade caravan with hired men-at-arms to protect them. This was absolutely needful, and even then, if their wares consisted of valuable matter, they were ever in fear of robbers, by night and day. But more interesting and more popular was the pedlar who tramped the country with a pack on his back, full of needles, pins, caps, girdles, gloves, knives, and sundry other useful articles, always bringing a most welcome excitement to every lonely hut and isolated village. A plausible and jovial race, still surviving in some outlandish parts, light-hearted and quick at retort, and especially successful with the women, who loved a bargain then as now.

We must not forget to mention the messenger, who was almost the only means of communication, for the bearing of letters and news. He would usually travel on horseback, if his master were a rich man, with the utmost possible speed, and woe to any who delayed him on the way ! When Pope John XXII. was elected at Lyons in August 1316, a messenger brought the news to Edward II. at York in ten days, and received twenty shillings for his pay.

But of all wayfarers on the high-road, the pilgrims were most numerous. There were so many reasons for going on a pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. The original purpose was to expiate sin, or to fulfil a vow

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made in the hour of sickness ; but many mixed motives crept in. Some would set out for the mere pleasure of the journey, willing to accept all the risk and discomfort and most real hardship, for the sake of a break in the deadly dulness and monotony of their lives. Some who were bent on gain would go as gypsies to a fair, in the hope of earning money ; others out of sheer laziness, that they might not have to work for an honest living at home.

When the worries and cares of home life became too troublesome, it was such a simple matter to take the pilgrim's staff and scrip, and set forth on your travels to some noted shrine of your own choice, probably with companions, if you desired society, or alone, if your case were serious enough to require the discipline of solitude.

As an amusing instance of the ruling passion, even on a sacred quest, we read of a certain De Werchin, senechal of Hainault, who in the year 1402 "announced his project of a pilgrimage to St. James of Spain. At the same time, he gave full notice of his intention to accept the friendly combat of arms with any knight for whom he should not have to turn from his road more than twenty leagues. He proclaimed his itinerary beforehand, that any one might make ready."*

Diverse as were their objects, the stream of pilgrims never failed. Some were still bound for the Holy Land, although the last serious crusade was that of 1270, in which St. Louis lost his life. One reason for the decay of crusading zeal was the increasing trade of the Italian States, more especially Venice, with the East ;

* Jusserand.

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and their commercial interests made it needful to be on good terms with the Saracens. Still if one no longer fought the infidel, one could get leave from him to visit Jerusalem.

All over Europe there were noted shrines whose fame for miracles spread far and wide. To mention only a few: at Lucca was shown the seamless coat of our Lord, and the Volto Santo, said to have been carved by Nicodemus and finished by an angel while he slept. Almost every city in Italy could boast possession of the relics of saints, whilst those at Rome were of special sanctity. Venice was noted for having, amongst other treasures, "the arm of our lord St. George, one of the water-pots of Cana, three of the stones thrown at St. Stephen, and the body of St. Mark, which is a very fine and noble thing." Also, "in the Maison-Dieu of Venice is one of the molar teeth of a giant that was called Goliath, which giant David killed, and know you that this tooth is more than half a foot long, and weighs 12 pounds."

The first papal Jubilee in 1300 was one of the most popular pilgrimages the world has ever seen; all the highways leading to the Eternal City were thronged, and it was like one huge fair. Nor can we wonder that the journey to Rome was so popular when we read of the special indulgence offered by Clement VI. for the Jubilee of 1350. "Should any of the faithful chance to die during this pilgrimage, the Pope ordered the angels to lead their souls straight to the gates of heaven without making them pass through purgatory." It was the custom for pilgrims to bring back signs and medals, which they wore sewn on the coat or round the

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cap, and which they could proudly show to friends and neighbours on their return.

Mingled with all sorts and conditions of men, we cannot doubt that there were many simple devout souls who fully realised the pious joy they had come so far to seek. Dante tells us of the pilgrim who looks earnestly at the shrine of his devotion, and considers in his mind how he will tell the story when he reaches home.

“E quasi peregrin, che si ricrea
nel tempio del suo voto riguardando,
e spera già ridir com'ello stea. . . .” *

(“As the pilgrim who draws fresh life in the temple of his vow, as he gazes, and already hopes to tell again how it is placed.”)

This motley variety of travellers will all need food and rest when the night comes, and for the most part will seek shelter in some wayside inn, where the wayfaring scholar is herded with pedlars and minstrels, friars and charlatans—all the ragged company who ever live upon the road. With memories of Boccaccio, Chaucer, of Rabelais and many another genial romancer, what images rise up before us at the very name of the mediæval inn! We know it as the resort of rogues and vagabonds, of thieves and cut-throats as well as law-abiding travellers; we hear the merry jests and gay rollicking ballads of a Pulci or a Villon, broken into by brawling voices, the anxious cry of the landlord, and the clash of weapons.

No doubt such scenes would be more frequent in the city taverns than in the more modest country inn,

* *Par.* xxxi. 43.

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although this last was by no means secure from quarrels, cheating at cards or dice, and deeds of violence. There was but little comfort; the fare was poor and the accommodation worse, guests who could afford it bringing their own provisions, and only trusting to mine host for the wine, which was often of good quality in a land of vineyards. Entering by the porch you would find a dark low chamber strewn with herbs or rushes, several long settles, a table on trestles laid out with pewter or wooden plates and earthen vessels to drink from. Little more was required, for each man would use his own knife, which hung from his girdle. The fire on the open hearth is of wood or peat, and food is cooked in a cauldron hung by a chain above it, or a spit on which flesh or fowl is roasted. The lighting is mainly by resinous fir torches or shallow oil-lamps of the old Etruscan pattern, for candles are only seen in the houses of the wealthy.

The sleeping-chamber is filled with beds of the roughest kind, and a traveller who arrives late will be thankful to sleep on a straw mattress in the common living-room. "Misfortune makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows" was no figure of speech in those days. The sounds of drinking and brawling, the rattle of dice, the coughing of sick men, the noisy talk of others, the coming and going—all this must have driven sleep away from any but the most hardened traveller.

The monastery was a constant refuge and shelter for the passer-by, who was always hospitably received. Only strangers of distinction would be welcomed in the abbey itself, while the great mass of people would be housed and fed in the guest-house outside the walls,

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where much the same kind of entertainment was provided as in the inn, with more security to person and property.

A lonely pilgrim, travelling on foot some wintry night, struggling against wind and rain, chilled to the bone, may have thought himself fortunate to reach a wayside shelter, and find it occupied for the night by Tuscan shepherds, wrapped up in their long-haired, undressed sheepskins, while their flocks were penned outside. They would be up and stirring at dawn, and possibly, on some such occasion as this, Dante may have watched the sheep coming out of the fold, in their timid, dejected way, which he describes with a master touch.

“ Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso
ad una, a due, a tre, e l'altre stanno
timidette atterrando l'occhio e il muso ;
E ciò che fa la prima, e l'altro fanno,
E addossando si a lei s'ella s'arresta,
semplici e quete, a lo'm perchè non sanno.” *

(“ As sheep come forth from the pen, one, and two, and three, and the others stand timid, bending eye and nose to earth—and what the first one doth the others do also, huddling on to her if she stand still—silly and quiet and know not why.”)

Can we wonder that our poet, who had travelled “as a pilgrim, almost a beggar,” through the land, and had looked upon so many varied aspects of life, should become broad-minded and gloriously liberal in his

* *Purg.* iii. 79.

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views ? We find him so full of spacious justice, vast as the horizon, that amongst his saints in Paradise there are not only great ones of the earth, but shepherds, fishermen, toilers in the field, even little serving-maids—all judged worthy to rise into the highest heaven and sit at the right hand of God.

Not in the schools of Bologna, of Padua, or of Paris, did he learn this lofty wisdom ; for those ancient classical masters of his, whom he studies with such reverence, were not interested in lowly folk : they sang the gods of Olympus, heroes, mighty princes, kings' daughters, and warrior queens. The pilgrim life on the road has done this ; it has given him the seeing eye, the listening ear, and that prophetic vision which can pierce the unfathomed depth of a human soul.

CHAPTER IV
THE BANISHED MAN

**“ Un voyage dans les lieux où Dante a vécu, est
une perpétuelle *illustration* de son poème.”**

AMPÈRE.

CHAPTER IV

THE BANISHED MAN

SOME historians believe that when the fatal blow fell, and Dante was exiled from Florence, he was at that time in Rome on a political mission. In any case we cannot doubt that he visited that city which he revered so highly as *la gloriosa Roma*, and which with her "two suns," the Pope and Emperor, was to him the very centre of history and humanity.

Scathing as he is in his fierce anathemas on the corruption of the once Holy City and her anointed rulers, he can yet write in the *Convito*: "I believe that the stones of her walls, and the very soil on which she stands, are worthy of all honour."*

From the allusion of Cacciaguido,† we gather that the poet first beheld mediæval Rome from the height of "Montemalo," now called Monte Mario, that glorious view which has been hailed with rapture by many a pilgrim since his day. Outspread before his eager eyes were the domes and campaniles, the fortress-like palaces, the crowded narrow streets—a gloomy mass of battlemented watch-towers and massive walls encompassed by a jungle of densely foliaged trees—and the whole dominated by the ancient Pantheon and

* *Conv.* iv. 5.

† *Par.* xv. 109.

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the fortress of the Coliseum. Then, as now, he could trace the course of the Tiber with its tributary streams, the Anio and the Allia, slowly falling from Fidenæ, passing to the right across the bare Campagna to the blue expanse of sea ; in the middle distance the long golden-hued lines of aqueducts losing themselves in the Alban hills, while beyond in the purple haze rise the distant snow-tipped Apennines.

Yet it is not the beauties of nature or the marvellous ruins of antiquity, far nobler than any still remaining to us, which touch the poet's imagination. But he pauses in his description of "that place in Hell called Maleboge,"* to tell us that the crowds of lost souls meeting each other on the grim embankment, remind him of the great throng of hurrying pilgrims in the year of Jubilee, as they crossed the Ponte St. Angelo from either side. So vivid is this memory that we cannot doubt he too was a pilgrim.

"Perdu, coudoyé dans cette foule, marchait le poète qui devait donner à cette solennité une gloire que personne ne soupçonnait, en y rattachant une œuvre donc lui-même ne savait peut-être pas encore le nom. Parmi tous ces milliers de créatures humaines destinées à l'oubli, il y en avait une donc le souvenir devait remplir les siècles."†

Again, in the central pit of the dread Inferno, meeting the giant Nimrod, with a strange flash of memory Dante describes his face as being "long and large as la pina di San Pietro a Roma,"‡ the colossal pinecone in bronze which then stood in the courtyard before the old Basilica of St. Peter's, but which is now placed in the Vatican.

* *Inf.* xviii. 29.

† Ampère.

* *Inf.* xxxi. 59.

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Of living men whom Dante met in Rome, one fateful figure towers before our visions ; the chair of St. Peter was filled by Boniface VIII., and of him it was openly said that "he came in like a fox, he ruled like a lion, and he died like a dog." He was still living at the ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*, 1300, but so small a matter does not trouble the recording poet. In the deepest gloom of the Inferno, the awful chasm of the Simonists, Pope Nicholas III. is represented as awaiting his successor, and mistaking Dante for him in the dim light, he exclaims : "Art thou there already standing, Boniface ?" *

Yet, although he metes out stern justice to the sinner, Dante holds the sacred office of the pontiff in such high respect that he can find no words strong enough to condemn the ignominious treatment which Boniface received at Alagna, and which caused his lingering death. This was in 1303, by order of Philippe le Bel, king of France, who is called "il nuovo Pilato." "I see Christ himself taken captive in the person of his vicar. . . . and him again slain between two living thieves (Nogaret and Schiarra Colonna, the envoys of Philippe); I see the new Pilate so cruel. . . ."† "Oh, my Lord, when shall I be made joyful by seeing thy vengeance ?" is the fierce cry of the implacable seer.

When the news of the triumph of the Neri and his own banishment reached Dante in Rome, we are told by Leonardi Bruni that he hastened at once to Siena, where the Bianchi, exiled by the same sentence, had already taken refuge. In a moment all the world was changed for him ; a man proscribed, a citizen

* *Inf.* xix. 53.

† *Purg.* xx. 91.

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without a city; henceforth sorrow and misfortune would bear him company to the day of his death, and even beyond that his exile would endure.

But the days of his lonely pilgrimage were not yet, for no doubt he had companions in his hasty flight; in that long wintry ride when, urged on by a forlorn hope, he could scarce endure to break the journey for rest or food, and his chief memory would be the suspicion and anxiety with which his little band looked upon each strange horseman who met them on the road. The outward aspect of the landscape has but little changed since the time when Dante fled from the Eternal City and made his way across the wooded valley of the Tiber, through the wild volcanic district bristling with its fortified hill-cities, and onward over the bleak and barren mountain country between the Ombrone and the Val di Chiana.

As the traveller passes through this malarious district, he beholds on the way that ancient Etruscan town of Chiusi—the Clusium of Lars Porsena—with its wild citadel perched on the battlemented height. The once mighty stronghold of a great chieftain, now fallen from its high estate, serves with Dante to point the moral that if cities have their term, it is no strange matter that noble families should be ruined and undone.

Within sight of his destination, when already the battlemented towers of Siena rose before him in the near horizon, we doubt not that Dante paused to gaze on the fatal battlefield of Montaperti, where half a century before, Guelf and Ghibelline had so fiercely fought, and the glory of Florence was laid low in the dust. On a steep little hill now crowned with dark cypresses, near the left bank of the stream



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SIENA FROM THE TORRE DEL MANGIA

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Arbia, there still remain the ancient stone foundations of Montaperti; that battlefield where the poet tells us came "the havoc and the great slaughter which dyed the Arbia red."

"Lo strazio e il grande scempio
che fece l'Arbia colorata in rosso." *

The Ghibellines of Florence had made ready for that fierce battle by a solemn presentation of their city and "contado" to "their Lady and Mother the Virgin Mary."

From the words of Dante himself, we are assured of his living presence in that hill-city, the rival and constant foe of his Florence. As we enter "Nel campo di Siena" †—the picturesque forum of the citizens, the centre of communal life, where the blood of many a noble family was shed in faction fights, and the people played their games—here we may tread the very stones where once his footsteps passed. As we look up to the grim Palazzo Pubblico, with its massive walls of grey stone and red brick unchanged through the centuries, we see what he saw, although his eyes never rested on the wonderful tower, the Torre del Mangia. But in the Duomo, then unfinished, he may have been struck by the pictured marble pavement of Duccio, and have recalled the idea in Canto XII. of the *Purgatorio*, where the hard pavement beneath his feet shows forth in sculptured form the proud laid low.

Dante was not one to temper his criticism for friend or foe, and we smile with him at the "vain people who put their trust in Talamone, and will lose more hopes there than in finding the Diana." ‡

* *Inf.* x. 85. † *Purg.* xi. 134. ‡ *Purg.* xiii. 151.

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Talamone was the malarious harbour on which the people of Siena wasted their substance, with that futile hope of an inland state to become a sea power. They had a wild dream of deepening the Ombrone, and cutting a waterway from Siena to Talamone. The Diana was a subterranean stream supposed to flow beneath the hill-city, where water was so much needed.

There is a tradition told by Boccaccio that Dante was once present in the Campo when a festival was going on. But his attention had been attracted by a certain book in a little corner shop, "which book was of much fame amongst men of worth, and had never yet been seen by him. As it befell, not having leisure to take it to some other place, he leant with his breast against the bench that stood before the apothecary's and set the book before him, and began most eagerly to examine it; and although. . . . a great tournament was begun and carried through by certain noble youths, and therewith the mightiest din of them around—as in like case is wont to come about, with various instruments and with applauding shouts—and although many other things took place such as might draw one to look on them, as dances of fair ladies, and many sports of youths, yet was there never a one that saw him stir thence, nor once raise his eyes from the book."*

Amongst the living men and women of his time in Siena, the poet mentions a certain Ghin di Tacco,† a famous highwayman described by his contemporaries as a kind of Robin Hood. He would take from the

* Translated by E. Gardner.

† *Purg.* vi. 14.

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rich to give to the poor, he would courteously return to the merchant a portion of his gold, and would exchange the ambling mule of a fat priest for some sorry beast, while he would endow a poor scholar and send him rejoicing on his way. Unfortunately a brother of Ghin's was condemned to death, and the highwayman stabbed the judge who had passed sentence on him, and after a while came himself to a violent end.

In the tenth chasm of the *Inferno*, Dante meets Capocchio the alchemist *—who had often entertained him by clever mimicry—amongst the falsifiers; he was burnt at Siena in 1293. In the same place several members of the "Spendthrift Brigade of Siena" are alluded to—a company of young men who wasted their patrimony in the most riotous living. Benvenuto tells us that after their sumptuous banquets every month, they would throw out into the street the rich dishes and goblets of gold and silver. Folgore wrote twelve sonnets in their honour, addressed to the "brigata nobile e cortese."

But the most touching episode relating to Siena is that of the gentle lady "La Pia," amongst a group of souls chanting the *Miserere*, in the *Antipurgatorio*, in the abode of those who suffered a violent death:

"Deh, quando tu sarai tornato al mondo,
e riposato della lunga via,
seguitò il terzo spirito al secondo,
'Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia;
Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma:

* *Inf.* xxix. 136.

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salsi colui che innanellata, pria
disposando, m'avea con la sua gemma.' " *

("“I pray thee, when thou shalt return to the world and art rested from thy long journey,’ continued the third spirit after the second, ‘remember me, who am La Pia ; Siena gave me life, Maremma was the undoing of me ; that he knows who, plighting his troth, wedded me with his jewelled ring.’”)

What sweet consideration for others must have been an instinct with La Pia, if at such a moment, she had the tender thoughtfulness to suggest that the weary traveller from the far world beyond the grave, should rest awhile from his labours, before even taking the trouble to “remember her !” That is all she asks for ; no vengeance on those who were the undoing of her ; not even does she entreat the charity of prayers to hasten her upward course to Paradise ; all she asks is one thought of remembrance.

A mysterious interest clings to this half-told tale of a most unfortunate lady. A small Gothic palace in Siena has long been pointed out as the “Casa della Pia.” This was the house of a certain Count Nello de Pannocchieschi, supposed to be her husband, but recently this has been disproved. From the haze of uncertainty there now remains but the legend that La Pia was a daughter of the Tolomei family, and was put to death in the Maremma, either by actual violence, or by the malarious poison of that marshy district. “Siena mi fe’, disfecemi Maremma.” The gem of her wedding-ring seals for us that pitiful complaint.

* *Purg.* v. 130.

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We are introduced in the *Purgatorio* to one of the most interesting citizens of Siena, Provenzano Salvani. The miniature-painter Oderisi has been lamenting the vanity of all earthly glory, and adds in illustration :

“ ‘ Colui, che del cammin sì poco piglia
dinanzi a me, Toscana sonò tutta
ed ora a pena in Siena sen pispiglia,
Ond’ era sire, quando fu distrutta
la rabbia fiorentina, che superba
fu a quel tempo, sì com’ ora è putta. . . .’ ”

Ed io a lui : ‘ Lo tuo ver dir m’incora
buona umiltà, e gran tumor m’appiani ;
ma chi è quei di cui tu parlavi ora ?’ ”

‘ Quegli è,’ rispose, ‘ Provenzan Salvani ;
ed à qui, perchè fu presuntuoso
a recar Siena tutta alle sue mani.

Ito è così, e va senza riposo,
poi che morì : cotal moneta rende
a satisfar chi è di là tropp’ oso.’ ”

Ed io : ‘ Se quello spirito che attende,
pria che si penta, l’orlo della vita,
laggiù dimora e quassù non ascende,

Se buona orazion lui non aita,
prima che passi tempo quanto visse,
come fu la venuta a lui largita ?’ ”

‘ Quando vivea più glorioso,’ disse,
‘ liberamente nel campo di Siena,
ogni vergogna deposta, s’affisse ;

E lì, per trar l’amico suo di pena
che sostenea nella prigion di Carlo,
si condusse a tremar per ogni vena. . . .’ ”

Quest’ opera gli tolse quei confini.’ ”*

* *Purg.* xi. 109.

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("All Tuscany rang with the fame of him who moves so slowly along the way in front of me; and now hardly a whisper of him is heard in Siena, whereof he was lord, when the rage of Florence was destroyed, in that day as proud as now she is degraded. . . .') And I to him: 'Thy true words fill my heart with deep humility, and cast down my rankling pride; but who is he of whom thou spakest?'

"That," he answered, 'is Provenzano Salvani; and he is here because in his presumption he would grasp all Siena in his hands. Thus he has gone and goes unresting, since he died; such is the price paid back by him who dared too much on earth.' Then I asked: 'If that spirit, who delays repentance to the verge of life—abides below and doth not mount up hither, without the aid of holy prayers—until he has passed here the same time as on earth; how was his coming here permitted?'

"When he was at the height of his glory," said he, 'he stationed himself in the market-place of Siena of his free will, and cast aside all shame, that he might redeem his comrade who languished in Charles' prison. . . . This was the deed which released him from those regions.'")

It was not his might and courage which shortened his term of probation, but the noble humility with which he once sat as a beggar in the Campo of Siena, to collect alms from every passer-by for the ransom of a friend, taken prisoner by Charles of Anjou.

The immediate neighbourhood of Siena is rich in memories of Dante. On the summit of a low vine-clad hill, a few miles to the north-west, stands the grim

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mediæval fortress of Montereccione, surrounded by grey battlemented walls from whence there once rose twelve massive towers, placed at equal distance all round the castle. The ancient ruin still commands the countryside; a vivid reminder of past war and bloodshed in the midst of this peaceful fertile land, where the great silver-grey oxen slowly and sedately plough the rich soil, and the earth is gladdened with the balmy breath of spring.

It is recorded on one of the ancient gates that the stronghold was built in 1213.

"Anno Domini MCCXIIJ indii mense martii. . . hoc castrum Montis Regionis in Deo fuit inceptum. . ."

It was in the territory of Siena, and in the year 1254 stood a siege against the men of Florence, who bribed the mercenaries employed for its defence, and Montereccione would have fallen into their hands had not peace been suddenly concluded between the rival cities.

Dante thus alludes to it. He is making his way through the darksome mist of the central pit in the Inferno, when he dimly discerns before him serried towers which look familiar, and he recalls the grim stronghold which once met his eager gaze in the fair Tuscan landscape.

" . . . mi parve veder molte alte torri ;
ond 'io : ' Maestro, di', che terra è questà ?'
Ed egli a me : ' Però che tu trascorri
per le tenebre troppo dalla lungi,
avvien che poi nel' maginare aborri.
Tu vedrai ben, se tu là ti congiungi,
quanto il senso s'inganna di lontano :
però alquanto più te stesso pungi.' "

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Poi caramente mi prese per mano
e disse : ' Pria che noi siam più avanti,
acciocchè il fatto men ti paia strano,
Sappi che non son torri, ma giganti,
e so nel pozzo intorno dalla ripa
dall' umbilico in guiso tutti e quanti.'
Come, quando la nebbia si dissipa,
lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura
ciò che cela il vapor che l'aere stipa :
Così forando l'aura grossa e scura,
più e più appressando in ver la sponda,
fugglemi errore, e cresce' mi paura.
Però che, come in su la cerchia tonda
Monteregion di torri si corona :
così la proda che il pozzo circonda
Correggiavan di mezza la persona
gli orribili giganti, cui minaccia
Giove del ciel ancora, quando tuona." *

(" . . . I seemed to see many high towers, and I
cried : ' Master, tell me, what city is this ? ' And
he to me : ' Because thou art passing through the
darkness from afar, thou art mistaken in thy fancy.
Thou shalt see well on arriving thither how much
distance deceives the senses, therefore spur thyself
on.' Then tenderly he took my hand and said :
' That the truth may seem less strange to thee,
know before we go farther, that they are not towers
but giants ; and they are all of them in the well
within the bank, from the navel downwards.'

" As when the mist disperses, little by little the
eye recreates that which had been hidden by clouds,

* *Inf.* xxxi. 20.

THE BANISHED MAN

so piercing that thick obscure air, and approaching more and more to the brink, error fled and my fear grew. For as in its enclosing circle, Montereccione crowns itself with towers : so the bank surrounding the moat was turreted with the horrible giants, up-rearing half their length ; they who are still threatened from heaven by Jupiter when he thunders. . . .")

Skirting the towered hill of Montereccione, the long white road stretches onward through vineyards and waving fields of verdure till it breasts the slow ascent of a lonely height where, to the left, a group of tall dark cypresses keeps guard over a sequestered Capucine convent. One more curve round the hill-side and before us is spread out Colle di Val d' Elsa, a stately town rising upward from the valley with tall houses on either side of a steep narrow street. Half way up, a grand old battlemented tower meets our view, unchanged since the day when from hence the exiles of Siena watched the fierce conflict raging below, which laid low their city's pride and gave victory to Florence.

For it was here, beneath the walls of Colle, where the great battle was fought in June 1269, and Provenzano Salvani, who led the Ghibellines of Siena, was defeated and slain by the Florentines. Then it was that Monna Sapia leaned forth from her tower window and hurled defiance at the God of battles, as she cried aloud in exultation :

" Omai più non te temo ! "

This warlike lady was one of the Guelf exiles, the wife of Ghinobaldo Saracini, and she had watched from

DANTE THE WAYFARER

afar the defeat of her fellow citizens, until she could no longer restrain her savage triumph.

Dante meets her in the Purgatorio, amid the sad band of the once envious spirits, who expiate their past evil passions, and learn through suffering the lesson of humility and love. Their penance is blindness, and they cling together and raise their sightless faces, like blind beggars round a church porch. Moved by pity, the poet asks if amongst them are any of Latin race. One dim shade comes forward wistfully, and replies :

“ ‘ I’ fui Sanese,’ rispose, ‘ e con questi
altri rimondo qui la vita ria,
lagrimondo a Colui che sè ne presti.
Savia non fui, avvegna che Sapia
fossi chiamata, e fui degli altrui danni
più lieta assai, che di ventura mia.
E perchè tu non credi ch’io t’inganni,
odi se fui, com’ io ti dico, folle.
Già descendendo l’arco de’ miei anni,
Eran li cittadin miei presso a Colle
in campo giunto coi loro avversari,
ed io pregai Iddio di quel ch’ei volle.
Rotti fur quivi, e volti negli amari
passi di fuga, e veggendo la caccia,
letizia presi a tutte altre dispari ;
Tanto ch’io volsi in su l’ardita faccia,
gridando a Dio : “ Omai più non ti temo,”
come fa il merlo per poca bonaccia.
Pace volli con Deo in su lo stremo
della mia vita ; ed ancor non sarebbe
lo mio dover per penitenza scemo,
Se ciò non fosse che a memoria m’ebbe



A. W. Andrews

TOWER OF COLLE

THE BANISHED MAN

Pier Pettignano in sue sante orazioni,
a cui di me per caritate increbbe.'"*

("‘I was of Siena,’ was the answer, ‘and with these I cleanse away my sinful life, weeping to Him that he condescend to us. Sapient I was not, although called Sapia; and I rejoiced more in evil to others than in good to myself. And think not that I deceive thee, but listen if I was not as mad as I say. I was already advanced in years when my fellow citizens, near Colle, joined in battle with their foes, and I prayed God that he would do his will. There were they routed, and driven back in the bitter steps of flight, and seeing the pursuit, I rejoiced exceedingly; so much so, that I lifted up my shameless face, crying to God: “Henceforth I fear thee no more,” even as the blackbird doth when the fair weather cometh.’”†

“‘I wished for peace with God at the verge of my life, yet my debt would not have been reduced by penitence, had it not been that Peter Pettignano remembered me in his holy prayers, grieving for me in his charity.’”)

Monna Sapia is said to have built a hospice for wayfarers, and after the death of her husband she gave his castle to Siena. Pier Pettignano, to whom she

* *Purg.* xiii. 106.

† This refers to an old Italian proverb, which says that the blackbird cries out, at the end of January: “I fear thee no more, O Lord, now that the winter is behind me.” But this seems scarcely just to the “merlo,” rejoicing in song at the first coming of sunshine.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

owed her conversion, was by profession a combseller, of distinguished virtue and honesty, and was also a Franciscan tertiary. He was venerated as a saint, and there are many legends of his piety and miracles.

We leave Colle by the noble gate of the upper town, on the summit of the hill, and hold our way along the ridge until we see before us San Gimignano delle belle Torre crowning the distant height, grey and menacing against the blue sky. The ancient mediæval city stands alone and defiant on its own hill, and to reach it the road descends for awhile to the lower ground where poplars in their first delicate green shiver in the breeze by the winding stream, and the sunny fields are gay with spring blossoms. We pass upwards through vineyards and little wooded knolls until at length we reach the "hillside's crown," once hemmed in by a tangled forest.

"And far to the fair south-westward lightens,
Girdled and sandaled and plumed with flowers,
At sunset over the sunlit lands,
The hillside's crown where the wild hill brightens,
St. Fina's town with the beautiful towers,
Hailing the sun with a hundred hands."*

As we enter beneath the great southern gate of this frontier fortress, the Porta San Giovanni, we are carried back to the very heart of the past, and find ourselves in a strange ancient world where Time has stood still. There is no other city in Tuscany which the tramp of centuries has spared like San Gimignano, —leaving to us a perfect relic of mediæval days, in

* Swinburne.

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the serried mass of grey towers, the great double circle of battlemented walls, the many ancient churches and grim fortress-like dwellings:

In vain have fierce faction fights of Guelf and Ghibeline surged against its defences, when every noble's palace was a stronghold, in those days when city was ever warring against city—Siena on the one side and Volterra on the other, with Florence on the watch to reap the final harvest. We may be sure that constant guard was kept on the tall watch-towers, and that the tocsin bells of La Pieve which summoned the burghers to arms, were never long silent.

Upward we pass through the steep narrow street, under the massive towered Arco dei Becci which defends the inner circle of walls, we cross the picturesque Piazza della Cisterna, and beyond the shadow of another stern tower we reach the Piazza della Collegiata, where the boys are still playing the game of Pallone, as they have done from time immemorial. Here the Palazzo del Podestà and the Palazzo Municipale frown defiance at each other, while the stately Collegiate Church holds a message of peace for both.

We climb the rugged stony ascent beyond, and reach the summit of the Fortezza above—the Rocca di Montestaffoli, from whence is a glorious outlook over the grey walls and towers of the city, gemmed with the golden wall-flowers, “fiore di Santa Fina.” All the fair landscape is outspread before us, rising and falling in wooded slope and fertile hollow, each “green-girdled” ridge crested with a towered castle, or peaceful village with yellow houses shining in the sun, or the grey walls of a convent guarded by dark cypresses ;

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while the encircling hills melt into violet in the far distance.

Six hundred years have passed away and yet the scene has not changed since that May morning in the year of Jubilee, 1300, when Dante Alighieri came on an embassy from Florence to San Gimignano of the beautiful towers. On such a spring day as this, he rode up the steep ascent and entered the city gate with his gallant escort, flaunting the red lily on their banner. It was within the newly built Palazzo del Popolo, still called "il Nuovo," in the Sala del Consiglio where the famous frescoes stood out in their pristine freshness, that Dante is said to have urged the claims of that Guelph League of Tuscany which he was so soon himself to repudiate.

Of the ancient buildings which he beheld, amongst the most striking would be the Collegiata, the Castello Nuovo, and the Spedale di Santa Fina, built with the alms of pilgrims to the honour of the little maid, Fina de' Ciardi, whose young life, closed in 1253, was one long martyrdom. San Jacopo, the church of the Knights Templars, stood amid its grove of olive-trees, and Sant' Agostino in the Piazza just inside the walls, consecrated in 1299 by that Cardinal d' Acquasparta who was to fail so grievously as peacemaker when Dante was Prior in Florence. Within its choir that same year was laid to rest the leper saint, San Bartolo—the Father Damian of the Middle Ages.

But we may not linger in San Gimignano, which is so rich in historical interest that it would need a volume to itself.



A. P. d'Almeida

SAN GIMIGNANO

CHAPTER V
EXILES IN AREZZO

"Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
più caramente, e questo è quello strale
che l'arco del esilio pria saetta."

Par. xvii. 55.

("Thou shalt forsake everything most dearly
loved, and this is the first arrow from the bow of
exile.")

CHAPTER V

EXILES IN AREZZO

At the time when Dante found himself at Siena with the other exiles, banished from Florence by the same cruel sentence, he had of a truth but little in common with them. A Guelf by early associations and a passionate lover of freedom, he was yet a born aristocrat, as we see clearly from his pride in Cacciaguido, his crusading ancestor, and from his passion for heraldry, for even in the *Paradiso* he shows himself minutely familiar with every crest and coat-of-arms.

As in his writings, so in politics, he was an eager visionary, and dreamed of one nation from the Alps to the far south of Italy, governed by an emperor whose seat should be at Rome, and who would lead all men to peace and temporal felicity. This ideal, which his classical studies may have helped to form, drew him towards the Bianchi, who had joined the Ghibelline or Imperial party. These were mostly men of "court and camp, soldiers, nobles and magnates," as opposed to the Guelf faction of the people, liegeman of the Pope—if by him they could attain self-government and freedom from the tyranny of their rulers. To understand thoroughly the position of Dante in those early days of his exile requires a

DANTE THE WAYFARER

profound knowledge of the political history of his time, in which the very fibres of his being were interwoven.

At least we know that it was his fate to be herded for a time with a company of ambitious men, fierce with disappointment and distracted by far other motives than his own. He appears to have travelled with them to Gargonza, a fortified castle on a hill between Siena and Arezzo, which was in possession of the Ubertini, a Ghibelline family expelled from Florence.

Through the mist of ages we can picture to ourselves that coming of the banished men to Gargonza; a familiar scene in those days when hospitality was the first duty of noble or prior. We can see the weather-beaten company slowly ascend the rugged hill-path, in straggling order; probably late in the evening after a weary depressing ride through the malarious district of the Val di Chiana. They may have lost their way more than once, for the roads are like rough lanes, dark and over-shadowed with trees, and they find some shepherd lad as their guide to the lonely castle. Perched up like a robber-hold, with moat and battlemented walls, the place is prepared for attack at any moment, and none can approach unchallenged by the warder, who has doubtless been warned with regard to these fellow exiles of his lord. There is a parley at the gate and a brief delay while the heavy chains creak, the portcullis is raised, the horses' hoofs clatter across the lowered drawbridge, and lighted on the way by men-at-arms with flaring torches, the motley group passes into the courtyard.

Tired and hungry, Dante and his companions are glad to dismount and enter the great hall, where their

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host will welcome them, and they can warm their stiffened limbs before the blazing wood fire on the broad hearth. It can be icy cold on those Tuscan hills, even on a night in spring. By-and-by the rude plenty of the evening meal will be spread on the high table, raised on a daïs for the lord of the castle and his more honoured guests, while the commoner sort will feed with the retainers at the lower tables placed longways against the walls. We may be sure that as men's tongues are loosened by the good fare and Tuscan wine, there will be loud eager talk at supper-time in abuse of the Neri and their doings, mingled with noisy jeers and half-muttered threats of vengeance. They will be too much absorbed in such topics to heed being interrupted by the clanking of metal goblets and dishes, the crunching of bones by dogs under the tables, or the "sharp cry of some ill-bred falcon, for many lords do keep these in hall on a perch behind them."

After a long day spent on the road and a heavy supper, there is not much inducement to sit up late; the more important visitors are crowded into the guest-chamber, while the rest are glad to go to rest in the hall itself, when the tables are cleared away, on mattresses of straw placed on the litter of rushes and herbs which is spread over the stone floor. Sleep must have been hard to woo in that motley company for any but the strongest nerves, with the restless tossing and coughing of a sick man here and there, and an occasional brawl between varlets who had not been able to fight out their quarrel in the day-time.

At the first break of dawn all would be up and stirring; the grooms hasten to the stables, the scullions

DANTE THE WAYFARER

to the kitchen—all men to their various duties ; doors are clanging, dogs barking, horns are blown, and the whole fortress rings with cheerful tumult.

During this meeting at the castle of Gargonza, the Florentine exiles appear to have joined with the Ghibellines both of Tuscany and Romagna. But for a time nothing came of their conference, and we next hear of Dante at Arezzo, a city which was constantly in a state of feud with Florence, and which was certain to be strongly Ghibelline in its views if the rival city were Guelf. Here the exiled poet took up his abode for a time, and it is interesting to remember that not long afterwards, on July 20, 1304, Francesco Petrarca was born in the Via dell' Orto at Arezzo. His father held the post of keeper of the archives in Florence and had been sent into exile with Dante ; but unlike Madonna Gemma Donati, the mother of Petrarca had accompanied her husband in his banishment. The young wife, Eletta de' Canigiani, was doubtless a woman of courage and devotion, yet in her case there was no young family to consider when she set forth on that hasty perilous journey ; she had not to make the bitter choice between her husband and her children. As for Gemma, we know so little about her that we have no right to judge her action, which may have been decided by no choice of her own.

Dante has never written one word of blame, indeed he makes no allusion to his own married life. But there are touches of domestic tenderness in the *Divina Commedia* which cast gleams of radiant light on his stern character.

He may indeed have thought the mother justified in sacrificing everything—even her wifely devotion—



A. W. Andersen

S. MARIA DELLA PIEVE, AREZZO

EXILES IN AREZZO

for her children, as when he tells us the pathetic incident illustrated later by Raphael : *

“ Come la madre ch'al romore è desta,
e vede presso a sè le fiamme accese,
Che prende il figlio e fugge e non s'arresta,
avendo più di lui che di sè cura,
tanto che solo una camicia vesta. . . ” †

(“ As a mother, who is awakened by the noise and sees the flames spreading towards her, takes her child and flees without delay, caring more for him than for herself—clothed only in her camisole.”)

We have already seen in an earlier chapter, with what delicate tenderness Dante alludes to many small details of child-life, which only a real lover of little children would have observed and remembered.

The ancient city of Arezzo has much to remind us of those days when the exiles from Florence found a refuge here. In weary discontent, they may have paced the garden where only ruins remind us of the Roman amphitheatre, and chaffered with country-folk in the market-place, and sought audience of the Signori in the Badia ; but most assuredly they were familiar with the picturesque church of Santa Maria della Pieve, already old in their time, with its marvellous façade in four tiers of columns, and ancient sculptures over the arched portal. The dim interior is of singular charm and beauty, with its avenue of mighty columns, and the grand simplicity of the raised chancel approached by steps on either side with the mysterious crypt below. There are ancient

* *Incendio del Borgo*, Vatican.

† *Inf.* xxiii. 38.

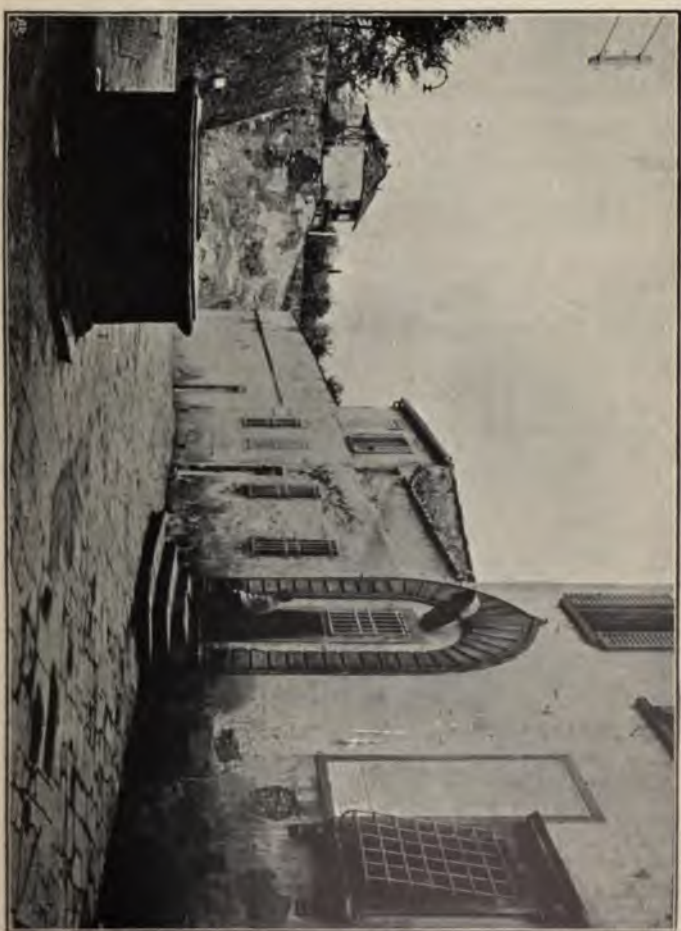
DANTE THE WAYFARER

Byzantine pictures on the walls, and an alto-relief of the Adoration of the Holy Child. Santa Maria della Pieve bears a striking resemblance to the splendid church of San Zeno at Verona, and doubtless owes its beauty to the same noble period of art.

There is a local tradition that when Dante was an exile in Arezzo he took up his abode with his friend, the elder Petrarca; and this we are most willing to believe when we find that the house of classic memory in the Via dell' Orto stands high up in the upper town, close to the Citadel and the broad Piazza del Duomo, which commands a splendid view of the hill country around. In this lofty spot, raised far above the noise and turmoil of the city, the poet might escape from the memory of his wrongs, and find a quiet haunt such as his soul loved, where the sense of space and freedom, amid the beauties of nature—the exquisite lacework of spring leaves and purple hills beyond—may have brought him inspiration for his immortal work.

Close at hand is the very crown and glory of Arezzo, the magnificent Duomo, towering above the busy life of the narrow streets, as it rises from the rock of the Citadel with all the flamboyant majesty of its Gothic spirit. The solemn west front is still unfinished, the carving has decayed and the statues are rude and broken, but as we pass under the splendid canopy of the south portal and find ourselves enfolded in the dark shadows within, we feel that of a surety Dante must have been at home here, and that he found a peace in these dim aisles which he had not known since he left his beloved Florence.

When his soul was vexed with the plots and violence of the noisy crew of Bianchi, that “compagnia mal-



A. H. Andrews

HOUSE WHERE PETRARCH WAS BORN, AREZZO

EXILES IN AREZZO

vagia e scempia," how often he might find a refuge at the close of day behind some sheltering column in the mysterious dusky gloom of that great nave, made more suggestive by the star-like taper flames from some altar here and there. From afar would softly echo the rise and fall of vesper chanting, and to the poet's fancy the sacred building would be peopled with spirits of the departed.

As we picture the scene and call up the long-forgotten past, it becomes very real to us; and yet even here the passing years have brought many a change. The eyes of Dante never beheld that splendid tomb of his contemporary, the fighting Bishop Guido Tarlati of Pietramala, tyrant and lord of Arezzo, whose stirring life was an epitome of his warlike brutal times. He still seems to hold sway there, turned sideways in marble state, while his very worldly and godless adventures are carved on his monument below. When a bishop was also a prince of the Empire, with broad lands, he was first a ruler rather than a churchman, and with little doubt we shall find him, as in this case, a staunch Ghibelline. His uncle, Guccio de' Tarlati, is said to be "l'altro che annegò correndo in caccia,"* alluded to by Dante. This Guccio, who was one of the chiefs of the Ghibelline party, was in pursuit of some Guelf exiles when his horse ran away with him and he was drowned in the river Arno. He died a violent death, but having repented at the last moment, was met in the Antipurgatorio. Amongst other people of his day who are mentioned by Dante as belonging to Arezzo,

* *Purg.* vi. 15.

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we find Benincasa* the judge who was stabbed by Ghino the highwayman, while he was at his writing in the papal audit office at Rome, whither he had gone to escape the vengeance of that Robin Hood of the Middle Ages. He also is placed by Dante in the Antipurgatorio, with those who died a death of violence and did not receive absolution, although he repented at the last.

The alchemist Griffolino,† who is met with Capocchio in Maleboge of the deepest hell, is not spoken of by name but is alluded to as "of Arezzo"; and he tells this curious story of the reason why Albert of Siena caused him to be burned. "'Tis true,' I said to him, speaking in jest; 'I could raise myself through the air in flight; and he who had a foolish desire and little sense, desired me to show him the art; and only because I made him not a Dædalus, he caused me to be burned. . . .'"

The most interesting native of Arezzo who may have been known personally to Dante is a certain Guittone, a poet who perfected the Italian sonnet, and whose Italian letters are the earliest preserved. When he was about thirty-six years old, married and with a family, he joined the Frati Gaudenti, "Jovial Friars," a nickname given to an Order founded at Bologna, whose proper title was the "Knights of Our Lady." The members of this fraternity appear to have had a very easy time, although their aim and purpose was most laudable. It was nothing less than to be universal peacemakers in that time of ceaseless feud, when city was ever at war with city, and neighbour

* *Purg.* vi. 13.

† *Inf.* xxix. 109.

EXILES IN AREZZO

with neighbour. We cannot wonder that they failed and fell from their high intent, forgetting their duties to think only of their privileges, which were many. They were suffered to lead a secular life if they avoided banquets and plays; they were even permitted to take up arms if they could plead that it was in defence of widows and orphans, or Holy Church, or the maintenance of peace. By a liberal construction, this ought to satisfy the most warlike amongst these "jolly friars." Dante has no mercy upon them, but places the Friars of this Order whom he meets, in the Inferno with the Hypocrites, who walk in slow procession, "weeping and weary."

"Laggiù trovammo una gente dipinta,
che giva intorno assai con lenti passi
piangendo, e nel sembiante stanca e vinta.
Egli avean cappe con cappucci bassi
dinanzi agli occhi, fatte della taglia
che per li monaci in Cologna fassi.
Di fuor dorate son sì ch'egli abbaglia,
ma dentro tutte piombo, e gravi tanto,
che Federico le mettea di paglia.
O in eterno faticoso manto!
Noi ci volgemmo ancor pure a man manca
con loro insieme, intenti al tristo pianto. . . ."

("Down below we found a painted people, who paced around with steps exceeding slow, weeping, and in appearance overcome with weariness. They had on cloaks with deep hoods before their eyes, made in the shape worn by the monks of Cologne. Outwardly they are gilded and dazzling to behold;

* *Inf.* xxiii. 58.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

but within they are all leaden, and so heavy that Frederick's compared to them was straw.

"O weary mantle for eternity! Again we turned to the left hand, keeping in their company, intent upon their dreary lamentation. . . .")

Amongst these Frati Gaudenti, Dante meets two citizens of Bologna—Catalano de Catalani, a Guelf, and Loderingo degli Andolò, a Ghibelline—who in 1266 were *jointly* appointed "Podestà" of Florence, to insure impartiality!

This Guittone was in Florence, engaged in founding the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli, in 1293, and died the next year.

The Aretines do not appear to have been greatly beloved by our poet. With his wonderful faculty of personifying every natural object, more especially the rivers which he knew and described so well, he lends his own disdain to the Arno (which turns sharply away a few miles north-west of Arezzo), and says: "Ed a lor, disdegnosa, torce il muso." *

It was probably in June 1302 that we hear of Dante and his companions in exile first meeting at San Godenzo, the little town which seems to hang on to a steep slope of rock, far down below the Muraglione Pass. It was a secret gathering held inside the Byzantine church, with its rosy brick façade and tower, where the exiles met, fierce with disappointment, full of wild self-seeking schemes—indeed, more like a pack of hungry wolves than steadfast men and patriots. We can picture Dante's ever-growing repulsion from such comrades—he a poet and a scholar, a philosopher,

* *Purg.* xiv. 48.



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PALAZZO PUBBLICO, AREZZO

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EXILES IN AREZZO

and a politician with inspired dreams and high aims for the beloved city which had driven him forth. In vain he made his voice heard, and sought to dissuade the banished Florentines from making common cause with the Ghibellines of Arezzo, Bologna and Pisa. They took no heed of his advice, but never rested until, having mustered ten thousand men, they rose in arms and vainly hurled themselves against the might of Florence.

But their plots and struggles, their fighting and defeat concern us not, for our hero broke off the uncongenial link which bound him to their fortunes, and turned away in loathing from that vile and evil crew, "*la compagnia malvagia e scempia*."* From henceforth begins the true story of his earthly pilgrimage as he passes onward, a lonely wanderer,

"Arriving only to depart
From court to court, from land to land,"

full of high thoughts and splendid imaginings of that majestic poem which was to be an epitome of life and travel indeed—but deep as Hell and high as Heaven—an Apocalypse for all time.

* *Par.* xvii. 62.

CHAPTER VI
DANTE AS ALPINE CLIMBER

**“Il a cheminé par les routes qui montent ; il a
contemplé les sites majestueuses de la nature, avec
leurs brumes et leurs rayons.”**

FAURE.

CHAPTER VI

DANTE AS ALPINE CLIMBER

AT the first glance, it may seem a touch of startling audacity thus to speak of the supreme poet and philosopher. Yet in that marvellous *Divina Commedia*, where each man findeth according to his need, we can clearly trace out a picturesque record of mountain travel.

We all know with what keen delight Dante recalls to memory every aspect of nature which met his eyes as he journeyed, a lonely wayfarer, through the fair land of Italy. With loving minuteness he dwells upon the rivers, many and diverse, whose names ring like music in our ears; those potentates the Arno and the Adige—Evola, Ema, Elsa, Ombrone, Arbia, the Limone of Faenza, the Saterno of Imola, the Bacchiglione of Padua, the Savio of Ravenna—to mention but a few; for each stream by whose banks he wanders becomes to him a dear companion.

The rivers are nearest to his heart, but he grasps a fearful joy from mountain travel. We read how he climbs Monte Falterona, from whose spurs the Arno springs, and some miles away the Tiber itself; while from the summit—unchecked by angel touch like Balaam—the exile denounces the whole valley of the Casentino. He looks upon the severed rocks of the

DANTE THE WAYFARER

Adige valley, the rushing waters of San Benedetto, he mounts up to San Leo and rugged Bismantova, and he passes by that rocky way, "most desolate, most solitary, betwixt Lerici and Turbia," along the steep battlements of the Mediterranean. More than once in his unending pilgrimage he crosses the Apuan Alps, whose heights are grim in crag and pinnacle and lurking crevasse, while deep below, their feet are clothed with russet oak woods and glades of chestnuts. The passes of the Apennines from Carrara to Gubbio are trodden by his weary feet, and "Dante che tutto vedia" has forgotten nothing, but calls up each thrilling vivid picture of personal adventure in the thinner air of the mystic world beyond the Styx.

Much of the scenery of the *Inferno*, and above all of the *Purgatorio*, is Alpine, and the pilgrim who so lucidly describes the perilous toilsome ascent of the Sacred Mount, is one who has himself climbed with painful labour and no little danger, by rocky pass and precipice, and has met with hair-breadth escapes on dizzy mountain ledges. Dante has an unfailing vision for every changing mountain mood; he has known alike the mighty winds of those high places, the tempestuous storms of rain and hail and snow; and the still icy breath of mist and fog, most treacherous of all to the climber, until the vapours grow thin and melt away at last into clear sunshine on the Alpine summit.

"Ai raggi, morti già ne' bassi lidi."*

Thus does the poet tell his tale of mountain travel, in the month of May in the year 1300, when in the beginning of that ideal morning he is joined by his guide

* *Purg.* xvii. 12.

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Virgil, and together they begin to ascend the delectable mountain: "The sweet hue of orient sapphire which was gathering on the clear forehead of the sky . . . to mine eyes restored delight. The fair planet which turns the heart to love was making the whole east to laugh, veiling the Fishes in her train."*

Was ever the planet Venus more delicately portrayed, as bringing jocund gladness in her train to all the eastern sky? We see in Dante's minute description of the heavenly constellations that keen insight of a dweller in the open air, who looks up to the stars as familiar high-born friends. According to tradition, Venus was in "Pisces" at the moment of the Creation, and she is so pictured in the old church at San Gimignano. This is merely an instance of his quaint exactitude.

The "old man venerable"† whom he meets, tells him: "The sun which is now rising will show you how to take the mount at an easier angle." "I looked up to my guide, and he began: 'Son, follow thou my steps; turn we back, for this way the plain slopes from its low bounds.'‡

"And as the harbinger of dawn, the breeze of May, stirs laden with fragrance, all impregnate with herbs and with flowers, such a wind rested on the centre of my brow, and of a truth I felt the wings move which brought me an ambrosial zephir."

"E quale, annunziatrice degli albori,
l'aura di maggio movesi ed olezza,
tutta impregnata dall' erba e da' fiori."§

* *Purg.* i. 13.

† Cato.

‡ *Purg.* i. 112.

§ *Purg.* xxiv. 145.

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Like the soft fanning of angelic wings, we feel the scented breeze which stirs at daybreak, when dawn conquers the mist which flees before her, while the exquisite charm and freshness of morn, inspiring hope and joyous strength for the day's labour, was never more strikingly set forth. And how simply told is that lingering before starting on a journey, in the words :

"We were like those who ponder on the road ; who go forward in heart though the body tarries."

When Virgil, the austere guide, asks the way of passers-by, we all feel the touch of our common humanity : "Show us which path is nearest, and if there be more than one passage, tell us which ascends less steeply, for he who comes with me, laden with Adam's flesh, is slow. . . ." * Or again : "Tell us where the mountain slopes, so that it may be possible to go upward ?" † Sometimes Dante himself was sent to make the inquiry. "Thus my master said : 'Speak and ask if this way we go upward—he will point out to us the quickest road.'

"We reached meanwhile the mountain's foot ; there found we the cliffs so steep that in vain would legs be nimble. . . . 'Twixt Lerici and Turbia the way most desolate, most solitary, is a stairway easy and free, compared with that. . . . 'Now who knows on which hand the scarp doth slope,' said my master, halting his steps, 'so that he may climb who goeth without wings ?' " ‡

"Si che possa salir chi va senz' ala ?" §

"Here is what you ask,' said one.

* *Purg.* xi. 40. † *Purg.* iii. 76. ‡ *Purg.* iii. 45.

§ *Purg.* iii. 55.

DANTE AS ALPINE CLIMBER

"A bigger opening doth the peasant hedge up with a little forkful of his thorns, when the grape is ripening, than was the gap by which my leader mounted, and I after him, we two alone. . . . One can walk at Sanleo and descend to Noli; one can mount Bismantova to its summit, with feet alone; but here a man must fly, I mean with the swift wings and plumes of great desire. . . ."

"Vasso in Sanleo, e discendesi in Noli;
montasi su Bismantova in cacume
con esso i piè: ma qui convien ch' nom' voli." *

"We were climbing within the cleft rock, and on either side the surface pressed against us, and the ground beneath required both feet and hands.

"After we were on the upper edge of the high cliff, out on the open hillside, 'Master mine,' said I, 'what way shall we take?'

"And he to me: 'Let no step of thine descend, ever up the mount behind me win thy way, until some wise escort appear to us.'

"So high was the top that it surpassed my sight, and the slope steeper far than a line from mid-quadrant to centre." †

"Che da mezzo quadrante a centro lista." ‡

* *Purg.* iv. 25. Sanleo is on a steep and rugged hill, in the territory of Urbino. Noli is on the Riviera di Ponente, between Albenga and Savona; and Bismantova is a steep hill in the Emilia, twenty miles south of Reggio. All that now remains of it is a massive precipitous rock, called "La pietra di Bismantova."

† An angle of more than 45°.

‡ *Purg.* iv. 40.

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"Weary was I when I began: 'O sweet father, turn thee and look how I remain alone, if thou stay not.'

"'My son,' said he, 'so far as there drag thyself'; pointing out to me a terrace a little higher up, which on this side circles the whole mountain.

"So did his words spur me on, that I forced myself, creeping after him, until the ledge was under my feet.

"There we did both sit us down, turned towards the East, whence we had ascended; for to look back is wont to cheer men."*

The words are so true for all time, that they might have been written yesterday. The travellers rest for awhile, with that feeling of pure satisfaction, in looking back on the toilsome ascent they have accomplished. Then Dante inquires somewhat anxiously:

"If it please thee, willingly would I know how far we have to go, for the hillside rises higher than mine eyes can reach."†

"Sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave,
e quanto non più va su, e men fa male."‡

"And he to me: 'This mountain is such, that ever at the beginning below it is toilsome, and the more a man ascends the less it wearies. Therefore, when it shall seem to thee so pleasant that the ascending becomes to thee easy, even as in a boat to descend with the stream, then shall thou be at the end of this path; there hope to rest thy weariness. No more I answer, and this I know for truth.'"

‡

After awhile, refreshed by rest, they continue their upward journey and are comforted with the assurance

* *Purg.* iv. 40. † *Purg.* iv. 85. ‡ *Purg.* iv. 88.

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that they will "find the pass possible for a living person to ascend." *

"As on the right hand, to ascend the mount where stands the church which, over Rubicante, dominates the well-guided city, the bold scarp of the ascent is broken by the steps . . . even so is the bank made easier, which here right steeply falls from the other cornice, but on this side and on that the high rock grazes." †

Dante finds himself so much lighter as he ascends, that he asks: "Master, say what heavy thing has been lifted from me, that scarce any toil is perceived by me in journeying?" He answered: "Thy feet shall be so vanquished by goodwill, that not only will they feel it no toil, but it shall be a delight to them to be urged upward."

"Ma fia diletto loro esser su pinti." ‡

Yet although he was full of spirit and with the best will in the world, it must be owned that Dante was not a very vigorous climber. A dreamy poet and a scholar who had been wont to burn the midnight oil, his was not the robust frame of the athlete. We find him speaking of "the toil which oppressed my breath"; and "after climbing, the breath was so exhausted from my lungs that I could no farther, and would have rested." §

Moreover he was no longer in his first youth, for he appears to have been about thirty-seven years of age when he tasted his first experience of mountain climbing. Still we gather that on the whole he bore

* *Purg.* xi. 50. † *Purg.* xii. 100. ‡ *Purg.* xii. 124.

§ *Inf.* xxiv. 43.

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himself bravely and manfully in many awkward places. Thus we read :

"I was urged to make my way up the cliff, which was rugged, narrow, and difficult, far steeper than the former . . . We climbed through a cleft rock, as far as the rock is cleft to give passage to him who mounts . . . between two walls of hard stone.* So we entered by the gap, one in front of the other, mounting the stairway which by its straitness parts the climbers.† Like the falcon, that first gazes at his feet, then turns at the call, and spreads his wings with desire of the repast which draws him there, such I became; and thus I went up to where the circling is begun.‡ . . . We moved on ever along the rock, as one goes by a wall along the battlements. . . ."

"Come si va per muro stretto al merli. . . ." §

"We pressed close to the hard rock of the steep cliff, and stood motionless as one fearing halts to gaze around . . ." Then Dante says : "My lord, let us go faster, for I grow not weary as before, and see, the hillside casts a shadow now." The evening was drawing nigh, and he learns that they cannot ascend by night and it is well to think of some fair resting-place. "Then we saw that the sun had set behind us, because the shadow had vanished. And ere the horizon in all its stupendous range had become of one hue, and night held all her dominion, each of us made a bed of a step . . . like the shepherd who lodges in the open holds silent vigil by night alongside his flock, watching lest a wild beast scatter it; such were we. . . . || Little

* *Purg.* x. 7, & *Purg.* xix. 67, 48. † *Purg.* xxv. 7.

‡ *Purg.* xix. 64. § *Purg.* xx. 4. || *Purg.* xxvii. 68.

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of the outside world could be seen, but through that little I saw the stars bigger and brighter than their wont. As I was thus musing and thus gazing, sleep fell upon me. . . ." Dante woke in the chilly morning, an hour before dawn, when the first stars of the constellation Pisces and the last of Aquarius had risen. "Then distinct with less and greater lights, between the poles of the universe, the Milky Way gleameth white. . . ."

"E già, per gli splendori antelucani,
che tanto ai peregrin surgon più grati
quanto tornando albergan men lontani,
le tenebre fuggian da tutti i lati,
e il sonno mio con esse; ond' io leva' mi. . . ."

Thus as the shades of night were fleeing away, and his sleep with them, he arose, for his guide had already risen.

The dawn has a special charm for Dante and he refers to it again and again, but never can he have seen it in such glory as when awakening on a mountain height, with the heavens above and around him. We call to mind those exquisite lines in the *Paradiso* which describe the stars fading one by one, and the dawn stealing over the eastern sky.

"Quando il mezzo del cielo, a noi profondo,
comincia a farsi tal, che alcuna stella
perde il parere infino a questo fondo;
E come vien la chiarissima ancella
del sol più oltre, così il ciel si chiude
di vista in vista infino alla più bella."†

* *Purg.* xxvii. 109.

† *Par.* xxx. 4.

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He omits nothing which can heighten the radiant picture. We feel with him the serenity of that peaceful hour, we watch the sapphire hue spread from the orient o'er the brightening sky, and the orange glow which follows; Mars setting blood-red in the misty sea, and the tremulous glitter of the morning star.*

"Par tremolando mattutina stella."†

We have traced the ascent of a mountain chiefly from passages in the *Purgatorio*, but for the descent we must gather the story in a great measure from the *Inferno*, by the perilous way which leads down into the abyss where all hope is left behind.

"Era lo loco, ove a scender la riva
venimmo, alpestre . . ."‡

"The place was alpine whither we came to descend the bank, and such that it would be shunned by every eye, as is the ruin on this side of Trent, which the Adige struck, loosened by earthquake or lack of prop. From the summit of the mount of the plain, the rock is shattered thus to give passage to him who would pass from above. Such was the descent of that rocky steep. . . .

"When we came to the top of the shattered bridge, my guide opened wide his arms . . . and took me up, so lifting me on the top of one peak, he looked towards another, saying: 'Now grapple that, but try first if it will carry thee.'"

* *Purg.* i. 13, ii. 14. † *Purg.* xii. 90. ‡ *Inf.* xii. 1.

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"Sopra quella poi t'agrippa. . . ."*

"Upon the bridge I stood, and leaning over to look, I should have fallen if I had not caught hold of a rock. . . . It was so dark, profound and cloudy there, that when I fixed my gaze upon the bottom I could discern nothing there."

"Oscura, profondo era, e nebulosa. . . ."†

"If ye come from lying safely prostrate, and desire to find the way most quickly, your right hands must ever be on the outside,"‡ is a curious little bit of detail which may have an occult meaning.

We now come to a most striking statement, which would alone be a justification for the title of this chapter. Dante distinctly informs us that he had a *cord* *girl* *round* *him*.

"Io aveva una corda intorna cinta. . . ."

Poscia che l'ebbi tutta da me sciolta,
sì come il duca m'avea comandato
porsila a lui aggroppata e ravvolta."

When it had served its purpose and was no longer required, he is thus commanded by his guide to unloose it from him, and to coil and wind it up. (It is only right to mention that there is no record of the rope being used in the usual climbing way, indeed it has been suggested that it was merely a symbolic allusion to the Franciscan Order! But, as we all know, commentators will discover symbols in everything.)

* *Inf.* xxiv. 13.

† *Inf.* iv. 12.

‡ *Purg.* xxix. 79.

§ *Inf.* xvi. 106.

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Even in these gloomy depths our travellers are still able to inquire the way. "Tell us," asks Virgil, "if there lies any gap on the right hand by which we may go out hence . . . ?" and the answer comes:

"Nearer than thou dost hope there is a rock which springs from the great circular wall, and bridges all the wild valleys. . . . You may mount by its ruins, which slope down the side and make a heap at the bottom."* The Alpine waterfalls could not fail to attract the poet's attention.

"We crossed to the other bank, near a fount that boils and pours down, through a cleft in the rock which it has formed."

"L'acqua era buia assai vie che persa ?
e noi, in compagnia dell' onde bige
entrammo giu per una via diversa."†

Following as near as possible to the bed of the torrent, they descend: "And we had gone but a little way when the sound of the water was so near us that we could scarce have heard each other's voice. . . . Thus down from a steep bank we found the discoloured water resounding so that it would soon have stunned the ear."

"Trovamo risonar quell' acqua tinta."‡

Ever keenly alive to each changing aspect of the sky, Dante tells us of the mountain mist which awaited the traveller as a fresh peril, that "gloom of hell and of a night deprived of every planet, under an un-

* *Inf.* xxiii. 128. † *Inf.* vii. 100. ‡ *Inf.* xvi. 92.

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happy sky, darkened by much cloud. . . . * Less than night and less than day”

“Quiva era men che notte e men che giorno” †

“so that my sight was dim.” Then we are invited to take note of gradual clearing away. “Ricorditi lettore . . . if ever in the mountains a mist hath overtaken thee, through which thou couldst not see otherwise than moles through the skin—how when the damp and dense vapours begin to melt away, the sunlight passes feebly through them,” until we see again the radiant sun in his glory.

We can scarcely imagine that the pilgrim poet had much experience of great snow-fields in the mountain passes he crossed, yet he gives us several realistic touches. Thus he describes “the snow amid the living rafters along the back of Italy frozen under blast and stress of Slavonian winds, then melted, trickles down through itself. . . .”

“Poi liquefatta in sè stessa trapela.” ‡

In lines of familiar beauty, he speaks of the softly falling snowflakes:

“d'un cader lento
piovean di foco dilatate falde
come di neve in alpe senza vento.” §

Where but on the mountains could he have so clearly seen the double rainbow—sometimes in high places almost a perfect circle—delicate shading off those marvellous hues, and repeating itself, “like the voice and the echo.” Nothing escapes his vision.

* *Purg.* xvi. 1.

† *Inf.* xxxi. 10.

‡ *Purg.* xxx. 85.

§ *Inf.* xiv. 28.

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He sets before us a graphic picture of goats on the mountain side, chewing the cud, in sheltered stillness at the noontide hour—watched by the goatherd as he stands leaning on his staff :

“ Guardate dal pastor, che in su la verga
poggiato s'è, e lor poggiato serve.”*

The poet's keen sense of beauty must have given him delight in mountain travel, in spite of the fact that, as he frankly owns, he climbed not for pleasure but from necessity.

(“ Necessità 'l c'induce, e non diletto.” †)

“ Necessity brings him to it and not *sport*,” we find the line translated.

Ruskin, in his chapter on Mediæval Landscape, has some very interesting remarks upon the mountains and rocks of the *Divina Commedia*. To begin with, he looks upon Dante as a bad climber, and says that the first strong impression made upon him by any Alpine scene is that it is bad walking. “ Still the steep precipices and promontories along the Riviera were then probably traversed by footpaths, which, as they necessarily passed in many places over crumbling and slippery limestone, were doubtless not a little dangerous. . . . Also a continuous mountain slope of 45° is already quite unsafe either for ascent or descent, except by zigzag paths ; and a greater slope than this could not be climbed, straightforward, but by help of crevices or jags in the rock, and great physical exertion besides.”

Again Ruskin remarks that Dante only shows interest

* *Purg.* xxvii. 80.

† *Inf.* xii. 87.

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in rocks as things to be conquered—but surely that is the point of view of the modern Alpine climber. Then Ruskin quotes the epithets used, such as “erto,” steep or upright; “sconcio,” monstrous; “stagliata,” cut; “maligno,” malignant; “duro,” hard; and “rotto,” broken. “No idea of roundness, massiveness, or pleasant form of any kind appears to enter his mind, and the different names which are given to the rocks seem merely to refer to variations of size: thus a ‘rocco,’ is part of a ‘scoglio’; a ‘scheggio’ is a less fragment still; a ‘petrone’ or ‘sasso,’ is a large stone or boulder; and ‘pietra’ a less stone—both of these last terms being used for any large mountainous mass.” In the terms he uses and the feelings they indicate, Dante exactly represents the mediæval idea.

Ruskin continues: “With hardly an exception, the range of the Apennines is composed of a limestone so grey and toneless that I know not any mountain districts so utterly melancholy as those which are composed of this rock, when unwooded. Now most of Dante’s wanderings had been upon this ground. He had journeyed amongst the Alps indeed, but the road from Garda to Trent, and that along the Cornice, are either upon these limestones, or a dark serpentine, which shows hardly any colour. . . . His idea of rock colour is, therefore, that of a dull ashen grey more or less stained by the brown of yellow ochre, precisely as the Apennine limestones nearly always are; the grey being peculiarly cold and disagreeable. As we go down the hill from Pietrapana to Lucca, the stones are of this ashen grey, with efflorescences of manganese and iron in the fissures. The whole of

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Malebolge is made of this rock: 'Tutto di pietra, e di color ferrigno' *; and again: 'Maligne piagge grige.' † Thus Dante shows his insight and accuracy.

Assuredly, in those mediæval days, Alpine climbing was by no means the pastime which it is to-day. The mountain passes had to be crossed, but it was a sad and doleful fate, only to be endured under compulsion, with a fearful and heavy heart. For instance, we read how the Bishop of Ely and Lord Montgomery were sent by our Queen Mary on an embassy to the Pope in 1555, more than two centuries and a half later than the date of the *Divina Commedia*. They had to go over the Alps by the Mont Cenis, and this is how the Bishop describes the exploit in his diary:

"Passing over the great Mountain Cenis, I was fain to hire one to lead my horse up before me, and I to come after him, holding by the tail, for fear of falling backwards, it was so steep to the top. There was such a noise of water beating upon the rocks, and such monstrous mountains to behold, of a huge height, being always in danger of some stone falling upon us that it seemed rather a hell than a highway to pass in."

We have another example of mountain adventure in the ascent of Mont Ventoux near Avignon by Petrarch, who was a generation later than Dante, born at Arezzo soon after he had been an exile there. Having read a passage in Livy—"King Philip ascends Mount Hæmus"—it occurred to Petrarch that, in emulation of so noble an example, he would ascend Mont Ventoux. His feelings on the way were full

* *Inf.* xviii. 2.

† *Inf.* vii. 106.

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of awe and anxious alarm ; he met an old man who implored him to turn back, but he bravely persevered, and when he had reached the summit, about 6000 ft., he opened the "Confessions of St. Augustine."

I think that Dante compares most favourably with both these later travellers as a mountaineer, and above all as a keen observer and lover of nature, by rock and fell, in mist and sunshine.

We cannot do better than end this chapter with a passage from Ampère, with regard to the hill country about Monte Falterona.

"Que de fois le poète a erré dans ces montagnes ! C'est par ces petits sentiers alpestres qu'il allait et venait, se rendant chez ses amis de la Romagne ou chez ses amis du comte d'Urbino, le cœur agité d'un espoir qui ne devait jamais s'accomplir. Je me figure Dante cheminant à la clarté des étoiles, recevant toutes les impressions que produisent les lieux agrestes et tourmentés, les chemins escarpés, les vallées profondes, les accidents d'une route longue et pénible, impressions qu'il devait transporter dans son poème. Il suffit de l'avoir lu pour être certain que son auteur a beaucoup voyagé, beaucoup erré. Dante marche véritablement avec Virgile. Il se fatigue à monter, il s'arrête pour reprendre haleine, il s'aide de la main quand le pied ne suffit pas. Il se perd et demande sa route. Il observe la hauteur du soleil et des astres. En un mot, on retrouve les habitudes et les souvenirs du voyage, à tous les vers, ou mieux, à tous les pas de sa pérégrination poétique."

CHAPTER VII
OVER THE MURAGLIONE PASS

“ Il est bon de voir ce que Dante a vu, de vivre où il a vécu, de poser le pied sur la trace que son pied a laissée. Par là . . . il devient pour nous-mêmes, quelque chose de vivant, d'intime, de familier; de passé il devient présent, pour ainsi dire.”

AMPÈRE.

CHAPTER VII

OVER THE MURAGLIONE PASS

WHEN Dante, in weary disappointment, turned aside and forsook "*la compagna malvagia e scempia*" of the other Florentine exiles, we reach the crucial point of our story. Then it was, of a truth, that he entered into his heritage—that harvest of a quiet eye which he gleaned from the whole world of nature. With his piercing vision, his keen sympathy and unrivalled memory, all that he saw became a very part of his being, and in his vision of the spiritual world he reproduces with simple fidelity each sight and sound of earth.

We see the poet as Boccaccio and others have described him, that dignified sedate figure, of middle stature, stooping somewhat as one who had long bent over his books, walking with a grave and measured gait. We recognise the dark dreamy eyes, the hair once auburn now deepened to brown, scarcely showing beneath the close-fitting cap, the thoughtful brow, the haggard cheeks, the lips pressed together in stern resolve. He who in his palmy days at Florence had been wont to wear the most dignified raiment suited to his age is now clad in a pilgrim's garb—the loose black robe with which we are so familiar in his pictures

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—possibly worn by members of the “Arti dei Medici e Speziali.”

Thus he lives for us once more, as we tread in his steps, for that we assuredly do, by the testimony of his own words, amid all the conflicting commentaries which darken knowledge.

We learn from Dante himself that his first refuge and first hostelry was at Verona with the “great Lombard,” generally believed to be Bartolommeo della Scala, lord of that city, the son of Alberto who died in 1301.

Here the poet was hospitably received, and made the acquaintance of his patron's young brother, Francesco, better known as Can Grande, of whom he formed great expectations.

From the valley of the Casentino, Dante sets forth on his journey to Verona, across the Apennines, and by the Via Æmilia—a route which we most clearly trace in the *Divina Commedia*. Doubtless it was trodden more than once by the banished man—in hope during those early years of his exile; in despair when time brings no relief, and the darkening shadows close around him. As we follow in his steps, we will so tell the story that we may pass but once over the same ground.

A most interesting document still exists, drawn up by a certain notary, Ser Johannes di Buto of Ampinana, and signed at San Godenzo in the upper Mugello. In this appears the name of “Dantes Aligherii,” and that of eighteen other Florentines, and we have thus positive proof of his presence there. From that straggling little hill-town we set forth, through the chestnut woods, and begin the steep ascent of the



A. H. Johnson

POPPI, IN THE CASENTINO

OVER THE MURAGLIONE PASS

Muraglione Pass. From the high ground you see a glorious panorama spread out before you ; the range of the Apennines, with Monte Falterona close at hand, of which Dante writes in the *Convito* (iv. 11) :

“ Veramente io vidi lo luogo nelle coste d'un monte in Toscana, che si chiama Falterona. . . .” We shall return to this mountain later on, when the poet took refuge for a long sojourn in the various castles of the Casentino. Some miles beyond the summit of the pass, we reach the monastery of San Benedetto in Alpe, which Dante speaks of in describing the falls of the Montone close by ; or, as he calls it, the Acquacheta (Still water).

“ Come quel fiume, che ha proprio cammino
prima da Monte Veso in ver levante
dalla sinistra costa d' Apennino ;
Che si chiama Acquacheta suso, avanti
che si divalli giù nel basso letto,
ed a Forlì di quel nome è vacante,
Rimbomba là sopra San Benedetto
dell' alpe, per cadere ad una scesa,
ove dovea per mille esser ricetto.”*

(“ As that river, which has a path of its own first from Monte Veso towards the east, on the left side of the Apennine ;

Which is called Acquacheta above, before it descends to its low bed, and loses that name at Forlì,

Resounds there above San Benedetto, from the

* *Inf.* xvi. 94.

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mountain, in falling at a descent, where there should be refuge for a thousand.")

These last words seem to imply that Dante visited the monastery, and was disappointed not to find more monks there. Or it has been suggested by Boccaccio, that a Count Guidi who owned the land above the falls had thought at one time of building a castle there, but did not carry out his idea.

After leaving San Benedetto, we keep close to the banks of the green river which bears us close company all the way to Forli, but first we pass through the ancient fortified town of Portico, with houses climbing its red marly hills, and a castle which once commanded the road from Romagna. The next village on our way is Rocca San Casciano, on the right bank of the river, and beyond it the picturesque road passes between Monte Torcello on the left-hand side, and Monte Grosso on the right, on to Dovadola, a little walled town with gates and battlements, and church towers and a mediæval castle. Memories of the *Divina Commedia* haunt us all the way, for the next place we reach is Castrocaro, a battlemented fortress in his day to which Guido del Duca alludes in his invective against Romagna :

"E mal fa Castrocaro, e peggio Conio,
che di figliar tai conti più s' impiglia."*

It belonged to the Counts of Castrocaro, who were Ghibellines, but submitted to the Pope in 1282.

Conio was another castle near Forli, which has left

* *Purg.* xiv. 116.

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no trace behind; and their nobles have died out as completely as Guido so fiercely desired. About five miles beyond Castrocaro stands Terra del Sole, the proud name of another little walled town on the left bank of the Montone, once the frontier-post of Tuscany. A few miles more across the treeless plain, with its well-watered broad green fields, brings us in sight of the castle of Polenta, from whence the great Guelf family was named.

"Ravenna sta, come stata è molti anni;
l'aquila da Polenta la si cova. . . ."

The arms of the Polenta, lords of Ravenna since 1270, had an eagle, "half argent on a field azure, half gules on a field or." At the time of Dante's first pilgrimage to Verona, the head of the family was Guido Vecchio da Polenta, the father of Francesca da Rimini, and grandfather of the Guido Novello da Polenta, who offered his last refuge at Ravenna to the exiled poet. Polenta is close to Bertinora, which is thus apostrophised by Guido del Duca:

"O Brettinoro, chè non fuggi via
poichè gita se n'è la tua famiglia,
e molta gente per non esser ria?"†

("O Brettinora, why dost thou not flee away, since thy household is gone forth, and many people that they be not guilty?")

This probably alludes to Lizio and Arrigo Mainardi,

* *Inf.* xxvii. 40.

† *Purg.* xiv. 112.

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of a Ghibelline family expelled in 1295 from their territory. Benvenuto tells us that Arrigo Mainardi was a great friend of that Guido del Duca, of Bertinora, who has most of the conversation to himself in the Fourteenth Canto of the *Purgatorio*, full of lamentation for the past, invective against Romagna, and prophecies of woe for Florence. Guido is spoken of as "vir nobilis et prudens," and on his death Arrigo appears to have felt his loss so deeply that he had the bench, on which they were wont to sit together, sawn in two, as there was no one else worthy to take the place of his friend.

We next reach Forli, the ancient Forum Livii, which is said to have been built by M. Livius Salinator after the defeat of Hasdrubal, B.C. 204, on the bank of the Metaurus, a little river of Umbria which falls into the Adriatic near Fano. The sister of the Emperor Honorius, Galla Placidia, was here married to Athaulf (or Adolphus) king of the Visigoths. Gibbon gives us some very interesting details of this great lady's wedding, which I have no scruples in quoting, as the event may probably have been one of Dante's classical reminiscences of the city. Galla Placidia, daughter of the great Theodosius, had received a royal education in the palace of Constantinople, but when about twenty years of age she was in Rome, during the attack of the Goths, and the victorious barbarians detained her either as a hostage or a captive. She was carried about Italy with the Gothic camp, and the successor of Alaric, the young and valiant Athaulf, sought her in marriage, the Roman Emperor being compelled to consent. The princess herself appears to have been quite willing. They were married at

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Forlì, but a great function was held later at Narbonne, when the bride was placed "on a throne of state, attired like a Roman empress, and presented with rare and magnificent spoils of her country. Fifty beautiful youths, in silken robes, carried a basin in each hand; one filled with pieces of gold, the other with precious stones of inestimable value."* On the subsequent eventful history of the Visigoth queen, the mother and regent of a Roman Emperor, we have no space to dwell.

On the site where now frowns the citadel, the Rocca di Ravoldino built soon after Dante's death, there stood in his day the ancient Roman fort of M. Livius Salinator, but his eyes beheld the old Palazzo del Governo and the beautiful campanile of San Mercuriale which shoots up in the broad Piazza, by the church which was dedicated to the first bishop of Forlì. There are still remaining other buildings of mediæval times, but to us of a later day, Forlì is richest in memories of Caterina Sforza, the warrior countess. The ancient city has had her full share of battle and strife.

Dante reminds us of the victory of Guido da Montefeltro over the French troops of Martin IV., under John of Appia, Count of Romagna, when they laid siege to Forlì and were driven back with deadly loss.

"I Franceschi e la gente della Chiesa ricevettono grande sconfitta e dammaggio, e morrivi molti buoni cavalieri franceschi. . . ."†

"La terra, che fe' già la lunga prova,
e de' Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio,
sotto le branche verdi si ritrova."‡

* Gibbon, iii. 455. † Villani, vii. 81. ‡ *Inf.* xxvii. 43.

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("The city, which formerly endured the long probation, and piled the bloody heap of the French host, finds itself grasped by the green talons. . . .")

The allusion is to the Ordelaffi family, of whom Sinibaldo was ruler of Forlì at that time. His escutcheon bore on the upper half "a lion rampant vert on a field or." Another citizen of Forlì is thus described:

"Vidi messer Marchese, ch' ebbe spazio
già di bere a Forlì con men secchezza,
e sì fu tal che non si sentì sazio." *

He is placed in the circle of the Gluttonous in Purgatory, this "Messer Marchese, who once had leisure to drink at Forlì with less thirst, and yet was one who never felt satisfied."

An old commentator tells a story of this gentleman, that one day he sent for his cellarer, and asked what was said of him in the town, to which the man made answer: "Master, people say that you do nothing but drink," when Marchese only smiled and remarked: "Why do they not say that I am always thirsty?"

Dante was a keen student of dialects, and he notices in his treatise, "De Vulgari Eloquentia," the special peculiarity which prevails in Romagna, and especially amongst the people of Forlì. "Let us now cross the leaf-clad shoulders of the Apennines, and hunt inquiringly, as we are wont, over the left side of Italy, beginning from the east. . . . One type of dialect, on account of the softness of its words and pronuncia-

* *Purg.* xxiv. 31.

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tion, seems so feminine that it causes a man. . . . to be like a woman. . . . These people (of Forlì), whose city, though the newest, seems to be the centre of all the province, speak thus: They say *deusci* in affirmative, and use *Oclo meo* (my eye), and *Corada mea* (my heart) as terms of endearment. We have heard that some of them have diverged in poetry from their own dialect, namely, the Faentines Thomas and Ugo-lino Bucciola." *

We will tarry here no longer, for this was a Guelf city when Dante passed this way, and it is doubtful how long he rested within its walls. At Forlì we first strike the great Roman road, the Via Æmilia, begun by the Consul Marcus Æmilius Lepidus, B.C. 87. It extends in a grand bold line from the shore of the Adriatic, at Rimini (Ariminium), and crossed Romagna, which included the present states of Bologna, Modena and Parma, and comes to an end at Piacenza (Placentia). What good fortune for the pilgrim to chance upon so noble a highway! with bridges to cross the many rivers which have their birth in the Apennines, whose lowest spurs there stretch out to the fertile plain. As we travel northward along the Æmilian Way, we have the vineyards and thickly wooded mountain slopes on our left, while on the right hand the rich alluvial plain spreads out through the misty distance towards the river Po.

After leaving Forlì, we first pass the Montone, gliding strongly between its banks, and following the grey road, shadeless and dusty, we cross another river, the Lamone, and enter Faenza. Everywhere in this part of

* V. E. i. 14; Trans. by A. G. F. Howell.

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Italy we find ourselves on classic ground, for on this spot—the ancient Faventia—Sulla was victorious over the party of Carbo.

In the days of Dante, it was ruled by the Pagani, who at the end of the thirteenth century were lords of Faenza and Imola. They were a noble Ghibelline family, and the exiled poet would meet with a warm welcome in their city.

“Ben faranno i Pagan, dacchè il demonio
lor sen girà ; ma non però che puro
giammai rimango d'essi testimonio.” *

(“The Pagani shall do well when their Demon is
gone away ; but not indeed that unstained witness
may remain of them for ever.”)

“Quando in Faenza un Bernardin di Fosco,
verga gentil di picciola gramigna ? ” †

(“When in Faenza shall a Bernardin di Fosco,
gentle scion of an ignoble plant, take root again ? ”)

This Bernardin di Fosco is said to have been of low rank, but to have shown such noble qualities that he was received by the nobles as their equal. He appears to have been Podestà first of Siena, and later of Pisa.

“Le citta di Lamone e di Santerno
conduce il leoncel dal nido bianco,
che muta parte dalla state al verno.” ‡

* *Purg.* xiv. 118. † *Purg.* xiv. 101. ‡ *Inf.* xxvii. 49.

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("The cities of Lamone and Santerno are guided
by the lion of the snowy lair, who changeth sides
from summer to winter.")

It is very interesting to note here how Dante, in these beautiful lines, speaks of the city by the name of its river, and of the ruler, Mainardo Pagano, by his armorial bearings; a lion azure on a field argent.

One more dweller in Faenza remains to be mentioned, the traitor Tebaldello of the Zambresi, who, in the early morning of November 13, 1230, opened the gates of Faenza to the Guelfs, led by Geremei of Bologna. He is described by Salimbene as "magnus et potens dictæ civitatis Faventiæ, qui vocabatur dominus Tebaldellus de Zambrasiis, qui non erat legitimus." Treachery was to Dante the unpardonable sin, and he piles up the most ghastly horrors to punish those who were guilty of it.

"E Tribaldello
ch' aprì Faenza quando si dormia" *

is found in the frozen circle of deepest hell.

This deed of treachery is a typical story of mediæval feuds. The Ghibelline family of the Lambertazzi had taken refuge in Faenza when driven from their native city of Bologna. But they could not escape the hatred of their fellow citizens, the Geremei, who, having entered the gates by treachery, rushed like wild beasts upon their prey, wounding and killing on all sides.

Continuing our journey along the Via Æmilia,

* *Inf.* xxxii. 122.

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and crossing the Senio, we pass Castel Bolognese, a fortress which was not built until 1380, and meeting another river on our way, the little Santerno, known to Pliny as the Vaternus, we arrive at Imola, which has but few memorials of her ancient fame. Dante may have worshipped in the Duomo before the shrine of Santo Cassianus the Martyr, and that of St. Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Ravenna, who was born in the town about the year 400, and who found here his last resting-place.

The writer of one of the earliest commentaries on the *Divina Commedia*, Benvenuto Rambaldi, was born at Imola ten years after the death of Dante. He speaks of his fellow citizens as "Cornelienses," because the ancient name of this station or "Mutatio" on the Via Æmilia was Forum Corneli.

"Sunt, inquit, Cornelienses ingenio sagaces, facundia eloquentes, viribus fortes, animis audaces. . . ."

The situation of this little town made it a place of importance in the Middle Ages, and its possession was hotly contested; it is also mentioned by Cicero, and Martial says in Ep. III.:

"Si quibus in terris, qua simus in urbe rogabit,
Corneli referas me, licet, esse Foro."

In the days of Dante, all these quiet little towns which we have passed on the Æmilian Way were so many distinct states, always at war with each other, and like the cities of ancient Greece, oscillating between the stormy rule of a democracy and the tyranny of some member of a noble family who had seized the supreme power. It so chanced that they were in

* Paget Toynbee.

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a state of comparative peace at the date which Dante selects for his journey through the spirit world—Easter-tide of the year 1300.

“Romagna tua non è, e non fu mai,
senza guerra ne’ cor de’ suoi tiranni;
ma’n palese nessuna or vi lasciai.” *

(“Thy Romagna is not, and never was, without
war in the heart of her tyrants; but at this moment
I have left none there openly.”)

* *Inf.* xxvii. 37.

CHAPTER VIII
ON THE ÆMILIAN WAY

**"Towered cities please us then
And the busy haunts of men."**

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE ÆMILIAN WAY

WE cross the torrents of the Idice and Savena, hurrying down from their native Apennines to the sea, and we enter Bologna by the Porta San Stefano, with the ancient towers of the city rising up before us, dark and majestic against the ruddy glow of sunset sky. The fall of day is the time to enter this grave and sombre town and see for the first time the older quarter; those mediæval churches and grim palaces, and the narrow irregular streets with heavy arcades over the footways. We seem to be enfolded in its dim and vast antiquity.

Nor is this strange when we remember that the story of Bologna stretches back to old Etruscan days, and that its earliest name, Felsina, is said to be that of the legendary king who founded it a thousand years before the Christian era. But for battle and bloodshed, for feud and faction, for pathos and romance, we need not go so far as that, had we space to follow those stirring chronicles. The rulers of Bologna joined the side of the Guelfs at first, and in one decisive battle they defeated, at Fossalto, the Ghibelline army under the command of a son of the Emperor Frederick II., Enzo, King of Sardinia. This gallant young prince

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was taken prisoner and carried off to Bologna, where he was shut up in the grim Palazzo del Podestà, that massive pile with its arched windows. This was in the month of May 1249, and there the hapless knight remained, eating his heart out, for more than two and twenty years, until his death in March 1272. All offers of ransom, all intercession on his behalf, had been cruelly rejected by the ruling Guelfs.

To add to the sadness of his story, the young king had no tender memories of love and home to soften his captivity; he was the victim of domestic treachery. His wife, Adelasia di Torres, the heiress through whom came his Sardinian property—the provinces of Logodora (or Torres) and Gallura—did not remain faithful to him, but obtained a divorce from her captive husband and married his deputy-governor, Michel Zanche.

Dante must have been familiar with the pathetic history, for he places this Don Michel Zanche with the "Barrators" (those who sell justice or office), in the boiling pitch of the Inferno. Here the only alleviation of torments for the lost soul is to talk about Sardinia with Frate Gomita, another "barrator" of the island.*

Within the church of San Domenico we may still see the carved image of this young "Hencius Rex," in the garb of a Roman warrior, with long flowing curls beneath his eagle-crowned helmet.

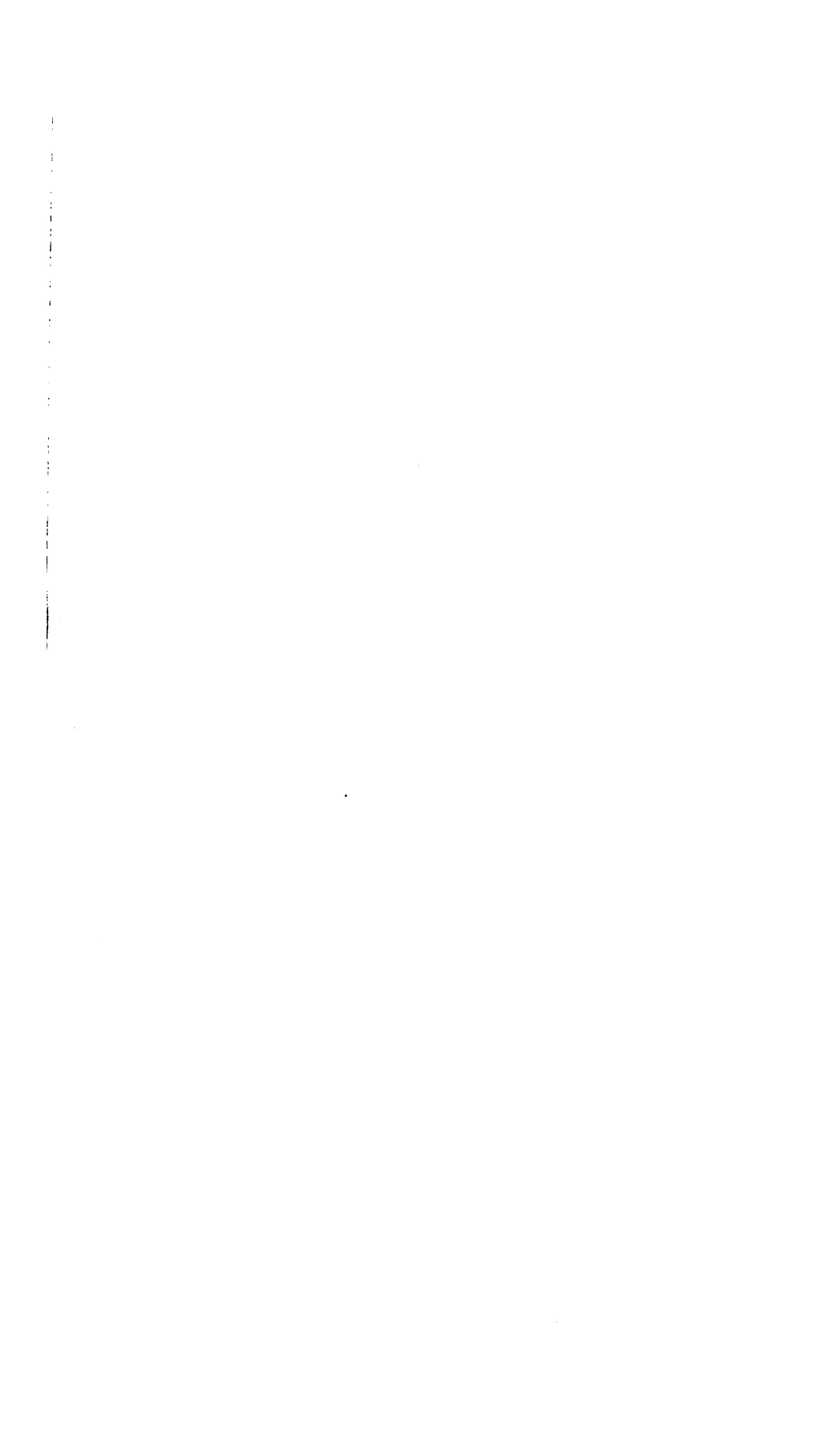
This is but one of many tragic stories, such as the pitiful death of the lovers, Imelda Lambertazzi of the Ghibellines, and Bonifazio Geremei of the Guelfs; but Dante passes on unheeding and we follow in his

* *Inf.* xxxiii. 144.



P. Puppi, Via d'Azeglio, Bologna

ENZIO—KING OF SARDINIA



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steps, pausing but for a moment to quote the striking words of a picturesque writer.

"Those desolate sombre streets, those immense dark arches, those endless arcades where scarce a footfall breaks the silence, that labyrinth of marble, of stone, of antiquity; the past alone broods over them all. As you go it seems to you that you see the gleam of a snowy plume, the shine of a rapier striking home through cuirass and doublet, whilst on the stones the dead body falls, and high above the lamp-iron where the torch is flaring a casement opens, and a woman's hand drops a rose to the slayer, and a woman's voice murmurs, with a cruel little laugh: 'Cosa fatta capo, ha!' There is nothing to break the spell of old-world enchantment, nothing to recall to you that the ages of Bentivoglio and the Visconti have fled for ever."*

This was spoken in all good faith; but alas! at the present time, the words are but half true, save in the dead of night, in darkness and silence. If we would here revive the memories of the past, in the garish light of common day, it will be within the ancient churches where time has brought no change in pillared nave and splendid choir, and where the solemn ritual of Dante's church still echoes back from the frescoed walls.

The most familiar allusion which Dante makes to Bologna is that in which he compares the giant Antæus to the leaning tower, the tall Carisenda. He selects the moment when the giant takes Virgil and himself in his hands and stoops to place them in the deep abyss of the traitors; he likens this to the effect produced on a spectator below, by a cloud passing over

* Pascarel.

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the tower, coming from the side towards which it leans.
These are his words :

"E venimmo ad Anteo, che ben cinq'alle,
senza la testa, uscía fuor della grotta.

'O tu, che nella fortunata valle,
che fece Scipion di gloria reda
quando Annibal co'suoi diede le spalle,
Recasti già mille leon per preda,

mettine giù, e non ten venga schifo,
dove Cocito la freddura serra . . .'

Così disse il maestro ; e quegli in fretta
le man distese e prese il duca mio, . . .

Virgilio, quando prender si sentio,
disse a me ; 'Fatti in qua, sì ch'io ti prenda,'
poi fece sì che un fascio er'egli ed io.

Qual pare a riguardar la Carisenda
sotto il chinato, quando un nuval vada
sopr' essa sì che ella incontro penda :

Tal parve Anteo a me che stava a bada
di vederlo chinare, e fu tal ora
ch' io avrei volut' ir per altra strada."*

(" And we came to Antæus, who, full five ells tall
besides the head, issued forth from the cavern. 'O
thou who, in the fortunate valley which made Scipio
heir of glory when Hannibal retreated with his hosts,
didst take of old a thousand lions for thy prey . . .
set us down—and be not in doubt about it—where
the cold locks up Cocytus?' "†

(" Thus spake the master ; and he (Antæus) in

* *Inf.* xxxi. 113.

† The lowest part of Hell, the marsh which receives all the
icy rivers.

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haste stretched forth those hands and took my guide. Virgil, when he felt their grasp, said to me : ' Come hither that I may hold thee ' ; then he made one burden of himself and me. As the tower of Carisenda appears from beneath, where it doth lean, if a cloud passing over it hangs opposite, such Antæus seemed to me, who stood watching to see him stoop, and it was such a moment that I should have wished to go by another road. . . .")

It is absolutely necessary that we should realise this magnificent simile, and perhaps a few illuminating words of Ampère may help us to do so :

" Pour rendre sensible le mouvement formidable du colosse s'abaissant ainsi vers les profondeurs de l'enfer, le poète a fait un emprunt à la réalité physique ; il a pris pour objet de comparaison un objet déterminé, la tour de la Carisenda ; il compare donc l'impression produite sur lui par le géant qui se penche, à l'effet qu'un nuage, passant au-dessus de cette tour et venant du côté vers lequel elle s'incline, produit sur le spectateur placé au-dessous d'elle. C'est alors la tour qui semble s'abaisser *de toute la vitesse du nuage*. L'image est colossale comme elle devait l'être, et en même temps elle a cette exactitude matérielle que Dante recherche toujours avec tant de soin, et au moyen de laquelle il parvient à peindre le monde idéal à l'imagination et au sens aidé du souvenir."

As we read the story, we seem to hear the persuasive words of Virgil, craftily flattering the half-sulky giant by dwelling upon all his ancient deeds of prowess ; we hold our breath at that fearful descent of the two poets until they are gently placed in the awful gulf, and

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Antæus upraises himself as the mast of a ship. And all this passes vividly before the mind as we stand beneath the Carisenda tower, and look up at its stooping mass.

Those who are curious in such matters may like to know that the tower is 163 ft. in height, and that it leans a matter of 10 ft. It stands near the centre of the town, in the little Piazza di Porta Ravegnana, and was built early in the twelfth century by Filippo and Oddo dei Garisendi. Facing it is the Torre Asinelli, which is nearly twice the height and dates from the same period.

With regard to other allusions to Bologna in the *Divina Commedia*, we find in the Circle of Hypocrites two natives of the city who thus tell their story :

“Fрати Gaudenti fummo, e Bolognesi :
io Catalano e questi Loderingo
nomati, e da tua terra insieme presi,
Come suole esser tolto un uom solingo
per conservar sua pace; e fummo tali,
ch'ancor si pare intorno dal Gardingo.
Io cominciai: ‘O frati, i vostri mali . . .’
ma più non dissi. . . .”*

(“We were Jovial Friars and Bolognese; I was named Catalano, and he was Loderingo; and by thy city were we chosen together, as usually one man is chosen, to maintain its peace; and such rulers were we that it yet appears round the Gardingo.”)

This refers to a curious incident in the history of

* *Inf.* xxiii. 103.

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Florence, when Catalano de' Catalani, a Guelf of Bologna, and Loderingo degli Andolò, a Ghibelline neighbour of his, were *together* appointed Podestà of Florence, in the hope that the two factions being thus represented, impartial justice would be shown to all. This was in 1266, when the *Gardingo*, now the Piazza of Florence, but then the site of the palace of the Uberti, was destroyed by the rising of the people against the Ghibellines.

Frati Gaudenti was the nickname of a religious order with aims too lofty to be carried out by its own frail members.

Franco of Bologna, the illuminator, is spoken of by the miniature-painter Oderisi, in that region of Purgatory where the proud are brought low.

“ ‘Frate,’ diss’ egli, ‘più ridon le carte
che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese :
l’onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte.
Ben non sare’ io stato sì cortese
mentre ch’io vissi, per lo gran disio
dell’ eccellenza, ove mio core intese.
Di tal superbia qui si paga il fio. . . .
O vanagloria dell’ umane posse.’ ” *

(“ ‘Brother,’ said he, ‘more pleasing are the leaves which Franco the Bolognese paints; the honour now is all his and mine but in part. In truth, I should not have been so courteous while I lived, because of the great desire of excelling on which my heart was bent. For such pride here the fine is paid! O vainglory of human powers!’ ”)

* *Purg.* xi. 82.

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Then follows that splendid tirade against earthly fame, which must have come from the very heart of the banished man.

Very little is known of this Franco, who appears to have been still living in 1300. He is supposed to have been employed to illuminate manuscripts in the Vatican library, by Pope Boniface VIII., at the same time as Oderisi.

Few cities are so rich in mediæval buildings as Bologna, and all these Dante must have seen although he makes no mention of them. We can well believe that he heard Mass in the ancient church of the Augustine hermits, San Giacomo Maggiore, passing in under the canopied doorway, whose shafts are supported by lions, to the broad nave beneath the immense vaulted roof. But the Bentivoglio family, whose memorial chapel is now the centre of interest here, had not yet risen to be the great lords of Bologna. We can see him in fancy, pacing the dim cloisters of San Domenico, the church which contains the splendid tomb, by Niccolo Pisani, of him who founded the Order of Preaching Friars. It also holds that pathetic memorial to the ill-fated young King of Sardinia, of which mention has already been made. Memories of his own "bel San Giovanni" must have drawn him to that ancient font in that strange labyrinth of San Stefano, dating from early Lombard days, which contains within its walls a nest of seven little churches. They are built on the site of a temple of Isis, and this curious devotion to the mystic number, seven, has produced a marvellous result, unique in beauty and interest.

But most of all, our impressions of the poet centre

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round the stately University of Bologna, the oldest in Italy, for tradition tells us that he dwelt within these solemn precincts, either as student or as teacher. Its past glories have faded away, for in the thirteenth century its fame had spread to all lands, and students flocked hither in their thousands from all parts of Europe. Even now in its decline it has a grave and learned air, yet we cannot help remembering with a smile that famous lady professor of the Middle Ages, Novella d'Andrea, whose beauty was so marvellous that a curtain had to be

“drawn before her,

Lest, if her charms were seen, the students
Should let their young eyes wander o'er her,
And quite forget their jurisprudence.”*

The Ghibelline exile can have had but little sympathy for the memory of Rolandino Passaggieri, one time town clerk of Bologna—who dared to bandy words with the Emperor Frederick II. when he haughtily demanded the release of his son—and to whom was raised one of those quaint canopied tombs out in the open Piazza of San Domenico.

With regard to the dialect of Bologna, we are told that it was not that courtly and illustrious language which Dante was in search of.

“Perhaps those are not far wrong who assert that the people of Bologna use a more beautiful speech, since they receive into their own dialect something borrowed from their own neighbours of Imola, Ferrara, and Modena. . . . From the first they get their smoothness and softness, and from the others a spice

* Moore.

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of sharpness characteristic of the Lombards. If, therefore, the people of Bologna borrow from both these kinds of dialect . . . it seems reasonable that their speech should, by this mixture of opposites, remain tempered to a praiseworthy sweetness, and this we without hesitation judge to be the case . . . yet this dialect is not that language which we term courtly and illustrious, since, if it had been so, the greatest, Guido Guinizelli, Guido Ghislieri, Fabruzzo, and Onesto, and other poets of Bologna would never have departed from their own dialect; and these were illustrious writers, competent judges of dialect."*

Of the work of the two Guidos no trace remains. But Onesto was a Doctor of Law, still living in 1301, and several of his poems remain to us, of which the best known are two sonnets, one on the "Last Judgment," the other, "He wishes that he could see his lady alone."

Concerning Dante's stay at Bologna we have no certain knowledge. His neighbour and contemporary, Villani, tells us that "he repaired to the school there," but the historian also says that on March 1, 1306, there was a riot at Bologna, when the Guelfs rose against the Ghibelline government and "drove out of the city and its territory the heads of the Bianchi party and all the Ghibellines and the Florentine exiles, banishing them as rebels, and ordering that no Bianchi or Ghibelline should show his face in Bologna or its territory under pain of losing his goods or his life." As after this time the city remained Guelf, we cannot suppose that Dante had any inducement to dwell there.

* *De V. E. I.* xv. 3, trans. by A. G. F. Howell.



A. W. Andrews

TOMB OF ROLANDINO PASSEGGIERI, BOLOGNA

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At the time of this journey his longing eyes were turned towards Verona and "il gran Lombardo"; and thus we continue our pilgrimage. Leaving Bologna by the ancient gate, the Porta Galliera, there rises before us the vine-clad Monte della Guarda, crowned by the pilgrim church of the Madonna di San Luca, so called from the dusky image of the Virgin, which tradition assigns to the evangelist, brought hither by a hermit from Constantinople. From the summit we see the cities of the plain outstretched before us, gleaming white in the sunshine, with fortress, tower and campanile rising spear-like from their midst; isles of light set in an emerald sea of meadows, where the eye can trace the course of many a classic river from the purple Apennines to the far-off misty shore.

Nearest of these is the Reno, of which the poet speaks in the second Eclogue by its classical name of Rhenus; we cross the blue-green river by a long stone bridge, and soon afterwards lose sight of the towers of Bologna, as we still pass along the Via Æmilia by Laveno and Castel Franco, through a smiling pastoral land to the gates of Modena. In earlier days of Roman supremacy it was named Mutina, and was one of the most important towns of Gallia Cispadana. In this connection only is it mentioned in the *Divina Commedia*, when in the Heaven of Mercury the Emperor Justinian, the great law-giver, is the spokesman and recites in glowing language the victories of the Roman eagle.

"E Modena e Perugia fe' dolente."*

("And Modena and Perugia are left lamenting.")

* *Par.* vi. 75.

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Yet as we stand within the grand old Lombard cathedral, of surpassing beauty and mystic charm, we may well imagine Dante in the peopled dusk, listening to the *Te Deum*, as it rises in waves of melody to the vaulted roof.

"Io mi rivolsi attento al primo tuono,
e i *Te Deum laudamus* mi pareva
udir in voce mista al dolce suono.
Tale imagine appunto mi rendea
ciò ch'io udiva, qual prender si suole:
quando a cantar con organi si stea:
Che or sì or no s'intendon le parole."*

("I turned listening for the first sound, and *Te Deum laudamus* I seemed to hear in a voice mingled with sweet music. That which I heard gave me the same impression as we are wont to receive when people are singing with an organ, and now the words are clear, then float indistinct away.")

At Modena we turn away from the Via Æmilia and strike sharply to the north, across the vast misty plain which merges into low-lying swamps and rice-grounds before we reach the valley of the Mincio. Here we see before us the lake-girdled city of Mantua, rising from the sedgy banks of a great marsh. For Dante this is the native land of Virgil, his master and his chosen guide. Only by a strong effort of detachment can we lay aside and blot out all the later history of "Mantova la gloriosa," all the crimes, the achievements and the fame of the Gonzagas, the whole story

* *Purg.* ix. 139.

ON THE ÆMILIAN WAY

of the Renaissance. Only thus can we see the ancient town on the slow-flowing Mincio as the poet saw it.

In the depths of the Inferno, amongst those misguided souls who sought by magic arts to pry into the future which belongs to God alone, Virgil points out Manto, the daughter of Tiresias the Theban prophet, and tells how Mantua his native city was founded.

“ Fer la città sopra quell’ ossa morte
e per colei, che il loco prima elesse,
Mantova l’appellar senz’ altra sorte.
Già fur le genti sue dentro più spesse,
prima che la mattia di Casalodi
da Pinamonte inganno ricevasse.”*

(“ They built the city over those dead bones [of Manto] ; and for her who first chose the place, they called it Mantua without any other augury. Once the inhabitants were denser in it, ere the folly of Casalodi was cheated by Pinamonte.”

This refers to the Counts of Casalodi, who came from Brescia and made themselves lords of Mantua in 1272, but they were hated by the people, who sought to expel them. A false friend advised Albert of Casalodi to banish all the chief nobles, under the pretext that they were the disturbers of peace. This was Pinamonte de’ Buonaccorsi, who thereupon put himself at the head of the common people, massacred all the rest of the nobles, and seized the government of the city for himself.

* *Inf.* xx. 91.

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As Dante and his guide are passing through the Antipurgatorio they see a lonely soul, of whom they wish to ask the way.

“Venimmo a lei. O anima Lombarda,
come ti stavi altera e disdegnosa,
e nel mover degli occhi onesta e tarda !
Ella non ci diceva alcuna cosa ;
ma lasciavane gir, solo sguardando
a guisa di leon quando si posa.
Pur Virgilio si trasse a lei, pregando
che ne mostrasse la miglior salita ;
e quella non rispose al suo domando ;
Ma di nostro paese e della vita
c'inchiese. E il dolce duca incominciava :
' Mantova ' . . . e l'ombra, tutta in sè romita,
Surse ver lui del loco ove pria stava,
dicendo ; ' O Mantovano, io son Sordello
della tua terra.' E l'un l'altro abbracciava.”*

(“ We came to him. O thou Lombard spirit !
How didst thou stand, haughty and disdainful,
scarce moving thine eyes with slow majestic dignity ?
He spoke not to us, but suffered us to pass on,
watching us after the manner of a couching lion.
Yet Virgil advanced towards him, praying that he
would show us the best ascent ; the spirit made no
answer, but asked us of our country and our life.
And the dear master began : ‘ Mantua ’ . . . then
the shade, all rapt in himself, sprang towards him
from the place where he stood, saying : ‘ O Mantuan,

* *Purg.* vi. 61.

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I am Sordello of thy city.' And they embraced each other.")

Was ever a more thrilling absorbing description than this, of the meeting between the lofty poet Virgil and that leonine Sordello of misty fame, in these latter days enshrouded in clouds of incense ? *

Dante, standing by as a spectator, and touched by the love these fellow citizens bear to each other, launches forth into lamentation and reproach of Italy for her miserable feuds. Later on he makes one more allusion to the traditional birthplace of Virgil :

"quell' ombra gentil, per cui si noma
Pietola più che villa Mantovana."†

In the "De Vulgari Eloquentia," Sordello is alluded to as a distinguished poet. "We conjecture that all borrow from their neighbours, as Sordello showed with respect to his own Mantua, which is adjacent to Cremona, Brescia, and Verona ; and he who was so distinguished by his eloquence, not only in poetry, but in every other form of utterance, forsook his native vulgar tongue." ‡

Sordello, indeed, found his own dialect so unsuitable that he appears to have written entirely in Provençal.

We have another most interesting reference to Mantua in the fact that it was in this town where he held a discussion on the relative heights of sea and land which induced him to write his treatise "De Aqua et Terra."

* Browning's "Sordello."

† *Purg.* xviii. 83.

‡ V. E. i. 15. Trans. by A. G. F. Howell.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

"Be it known to you all that when I was in Mantua, a certain discussion arose. . . ."*

We leave the city by the Porta di San Giorgio, and cross the ancient bridge, the Argine Mulino, which divides the chain of lakes formed here by the Mincio, and pass onward through the fertile swampy plain, thus exactly and vividly described by Dante in a few expressive words :

"Non molto ha corso, che trova una lama,
nella qual si distende e la *impaluda*,
e suol di state talora esser grama."†

("It [the Mincio] has not flowed far, when it finds a level, on which it spreads and makes of it a marsh, and at times in summer it is wont to be pestilential.")

The word "*impaluda*" seems to describe perfectly the aspect of the country before us ; those melancholy Virgilian meads, over which so often hovers a hazy cloud of moisture, which the sun's rays can but dimly pierce ; where silvery lakes are outspread beneath a canopy of mist. Our long pilgrimage from San Godenza in the Casentino is almost at an end, for within a day's journey of Mantua we see before us the great Lombard walls of Verona :

"Lo primo tuo rifugio e il primo ostello."

("Thy first refuge and thy first hostel.")

* A. T. sec. i. Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

† *Inf.* xx. 79.

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CHAPTER IX

THE BIRDS OF DANTE

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**"Io mi son un che, quando
amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
che ditta dentro, vo significando."**

Purg. xxiv. 52.

**("I am one who, when love inspires me, give
heed and write in such fashion as he dictates.")**

CHAPTER IX

THE BIRDS OF DANTE

As a wayfarer wanders through the land at his own sweet will, with a heart at leisure to mark the ever-changing sights and sounds of earth and sky, perhaps there is nothing which holds for him a keener attraction than the flight of birds, and their trill of joyous song.

It is therefore with no surprise, but with exceeding pleasure, that we discover in the *Divina Commedia* so many allusions to the "little brothers of St. Francis," who found a warm place in the poet's heart.

"Pelligrino, quasi mendicando," as he speaks of himself, he trod the pilgrim way, and because of that very poverty—which enclosed him in no walled garden of his own—he claimed the glorious heritage of all the realm of nature. The birds he loved so well, are still flitting in and out of the crevices and ruined battlements of ancient castles where once Dante was a welcome guest, and to us who watch their flight and hear them ever calling, calling, they keep alive the memory of their friend who once passed by.

As he tells the story of doom in the world beyond

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the grave, there ever flash before him memories of these fair fields of earth where once he paced in lonely thought, "con passi lentia." With a few vivid touches he calls up before us pictures, familiar then as now, of the eagle poised in the sky, or swooping down a mountain side; of cranes, with their melancholy long-drawn cry, stretching in a line across the blue heaven; of the stork brooding over her nest; the widespread company of starlings taking their strong hurried flight; of water-birds rising from where the flags are thickest amid rustling elders; of the lark filled with a passion of melody and silent for very joy—these and many another exquisite simile.

Perhaps on no journey of the poet's would all this have appealed to him more than during that which we have just taken with him—across the pale misty plain of Romagna, where the sun shines through a golden haze on streams dappled by the breeze, and meadows full to the brim with a light of laughing flowers.

We will begin the story with Jove's own bird, the lordly eagle. In that morning hour when visions are almost prophetic :

"In sogno mi pareva veder sospesa
un' aquila nel ciel con penne d'oro
con l'ali aperte, ed a calare intesa. . . .
Fra me pensava : Forse questa fiede
pur qui per uso, e forse d'altro loco
disdegna di portarne suso in piede."*

("In a dream it appeared to me that I saw an eagle hovering in the sky, with golden plumes, with

* *Purg.* ix. 19.

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wings outspread and hovering to swoop. . . . I thought within myself, 'Perhaps he strikes here only through custom, and disdains to bear aught from elsewhere above in his talons.'")

And again, touching the bird's rapid flight, we read:

"Non scese mai con sì veloce moto
foco di spessa nube, quando piove
da quel confine che più va remoto,
Com' io vidi calar l'uccel di Giove
per l'arbor giù, rompendo della scorza,
non che dei fiori e delle foglie nuove."*

("Never did flash descend from a stormy cloud with so swift a motion, when it darts from the most remote confines, as I saw the bird of Jupiter swoop down through the tree, rending its bark and also its flowers and new leaves.")

"Che sopra gli altri, com' aquila, vola."†

("Which like an eagle soars above the rest.")

Then, alluding to his keen vision, we find him compared to Beatrice, gazing on the sun.

"e riguardar nel sole.
Aquila sì non gli s'affisse unquanco."‡

As most nearly allied to the king of birds, we will next select the falcon, tracing out in the *Divina Commedia* Dante's clear knowledge and vivid reminis-

* *Purg.* xxxii. 109.

† *Inf.* iv. 96.

‡ *Par.* i. 48.

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cences of the gentle art of falconry. With this he may have become familiar during those early youthful days when, in spite of his eager study, he was able to take part in the gay life of Florence. Thus he evidently describes from familiar experience the peregrine pluming himself for flight :

“ Qual il falcon, ch’uscendo del cappello
move la testa e coll’ ali si plaude,
voglia mostrando e facendosi bello. . . .” *

(“ As the falcon, issuing from his hood, shakes his head and claps his wings, showing desire and making himself beautiful. . . .”)

and again :

“ Quale il falcon che prima ai piè si mira,
indi si volge al grido, e si protende
per lo disio del pasto che là il tira. . . .” †

(“ Like the falcon, who first looks down at his feet, then turns at the call, and spreads his wings with longing for the food which draws him thither. . . .”)

Lastly, in the *Inferno*, we have a striking description of the hawk unwillingly coming back to his lord in disgrace, having missed his quarry.

“ Come il falcon ch’è stato assai sull’ ali,
che senza veder logoro o uccello,
fa dire al falconiere : ‘ Oimè tu cali ! ’

* *Par.* xix. 34.

† *Purg.* xix. 64.

THE BIRDS OF DANTE

Discende lasso, onde si mosse snello,
per cento rote, e da lungi si pone
dal suo maestro, desdegnoso e fello. . . .”*

(“ As the falcon which has been long on the wing,
but hath seen neither bird nor lure, makes the
falconer cry: ‘ Ah me ! thou stoopest to earth ! ’
descends weary, then swiftly wheels round in many
a circle, and far from his master places himself,
disdainful and sullen. . . .”)

In the Middle Ages falconry was the sport of kings,
and we are told that a noble, in time of peace, never
stirred out without a hawk upon his wrist, which in old
illuminations and upon ancient seals is the token of
nobility. The special kinds of birds which were used
for hawking were very valuable, and the rent of a
farm has been valued at “ three hawks and three
ger-falcons.” It was felony to steal a falcon, and to
take its eggs was a crime punished by imprisonment
for a year and a day. There are many curious old
treatises which throw a most interesting light on the
gentle art of falconry.

To return to the birds immortalised by Dante. We
next come to the cranes, whom he likens in their flight
to the souls who sweep past each other, circling round
the Mount of Purgation.

“ Poi come gru, ch’alle montagne Rife
volasser parte, e parte in ver l’arene,
queste del gel, quelle del sole schife.”†

* *Inf.* xvii. 127.

† *Purg.* xxvi. 43.

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("Then like cranes that fly, some to the Rhiplean mountains, others towards the sands: these to avoid the frost, those the sun.")

The Rhiplean mountains are supposed to be a lofty range far away to the north; it was a name used by classical writers for any cold northern region of Europe and Asia. Perhaps the cranes parted only to meet again, for we do not quite understand why they should not all be going the same way. Dante mentions these birds again in the *Inferno*, when he is describing those unhappy spirits who for their punishment are driven about incessantly by fierce winds.

"E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
facendo in aer di sè lunga riga;
così vid' io venir, traendo guai.
Ombre portate dalla detta briga. . . ."

("And as the cranes go chanting their lays, making a long line in procession of themselves in the air; so I saw the shadows come wailing. . . .")

At the time of their migration, cranes collect in large flocks of several thousands, dividing into groups of from twenty to sixty, one of the largest and strongest birds leading each of these, spread out behind him into two diverging lines. The poet may have seen them in the marshy lake country near Mantua, which he so well describes as "impaluda"; or "in the dewy pastures of Pelorus" (the plain round Ravenna), the mournful shore of the Adriatic.

* *Inf.* v. 46.

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The call-note of the crane is said to be a very loud, harsh and peculiar sound, and is well described by comparing it to a trumpet sounding the word "coor" in long-drawn notes. We can understand how this might appeal to Dante as like unto the wail of lost souls.

Nearly connected with the crane is the stork, which has such an excellent reputation for tender attachment to its home and its young.

"Quale sopr' esso il nido sì rigira
poi che ha pasciuto la cicogna i figli,
e come quei ch' è pasto la rimira."*

("As above her nest the stork goes circling round
when she has fed her little ones, and he who has
been fed looks up at her.")

The little stork is looked upon as a symbol of obedient docility here, but in another place the poet of the *Purgatorio* speaks of the young bird as longing to try its wings and not daring to do so. He compares this to his own case, when he earnestly desires to ask a question of his guide, but cannot take courage to frame the words.

"E quale il cicognin che leva l'ala
per voglia di volare, e non s'attenta
d'abbandonar lo nido, e giù la cala."†

("And as the young stork lifts his wing through
desire to fly, yet daring not to abandon the nest,
drops it again.")

* *Par.* xix. 91.

† *Purg.* xxv. 10.

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We all know in what high respect and veneration the stork has been held from time immemorial. The Hebrew name for it was Chaseda, which signifies piety or mercy, from the tenderness supposed to be shown by the young to the old birds, bringing them food when feeble or hurt. There are many stories of the affection shown by the parent birds to their little ones, and they have been known to perish rather than desert them. The following quotation might apply either to cranes or storks:

"Come gli augei che vernan lungo il Nilo
alcuna volta in aer fanno schiera,
poi volan più in fretta e vanno in filo."*

("As birds that winter along the Nile sometimes
turn themselves as with serried ranks in the air, then
fly in more haste and go in file.")

This also to water-loving birds :

"E come augelli surti di riviera,
quasi congratulando a lor pasture,
fanno di sè or tonda or lunga schiera."†

("And like birds risen from the shore, as though
rejoicing together o'er their pasture, make them-
selves into squadrons, now round, now round.")

Most familiar to us are the starlings :

"E come gli stornei ne portan l'ali,
nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena."‡

* *Purg.* xxiv. 64.

† *Par.* xviii. 73.

‡ *Inf.* v. 40.

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("As their wings bear the starlings along, at the winter season, in large and crowded troops; so the blast drives the evil spirits hither, thither, up and down.")

More cheerful memories are awakened by the flight of rooks, for we find their flight compared to the descent of the "splendours" down Jacob's golden ladder.

"E come, per lo natural costume,
le pole insieme, al cominciar del giorno,
sì movono a scaldar le fredde piume
Poi altre vanno via senza ritorno,
altre rivolgon sè, onde son mosse,
ed altre roteando fan soggiorno. . . ."

("And as according to their nature, the rooks set out in company at the break of day, to warm their cold feathers; then some fly off without return, others come again to whence they started from, and others, wheeling round, remain at home. . . .")

We now come to that most exquisite simile in which Beatrice is compared to a bird watching for the dawn.

"Come l'augello, intra l'amate fronde,
posato al nido dei suoi dolci nati
la notte che le cose ci nasconde,
Che, per veder gli aspetti disiati,
e per trovar lo cibo onde li pasca,
in che i gravi labor gli sono aggrati,

* *Par.* xxi. 34.

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Previene il tempo in su l'aperto frasca,
e con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,
fiso guardando pur che l'alba nasca ;
Così la donna mia si stava eretta
ed attenta. . . .”*

(“ Even as a bird amidst the beloved foliage, quiet upon the nest of her sweet brood, through the night which hideth all things from us, who, that she may behold their longed-for aspect, and find the food wherewith to nourish them—in which her heavy toil is pleasant to her—foreruns the time, upon the open spray, and with glowing love awaits the sun, gazing intent for the dawn to rise ; so was my lady standing, erect and eager. . . .”)

As Dante once entered the garden of Eden, facing the rising sun, he met a sweet breeze laden with the odours of Paradise, and full of the song of birds, which he thus describes :

“ Gli augelletti per le cime
lasciasser d'operare ogni lor arte ;
Ma con piena letizia l'ôre prime,
cantando ricevièno intra le foglie
che tenevan bordone alle sue rime.”†

(“ The little birds in the tree tops ceased not to practise their wonted art ; but singing with full gladness, they welcomed the first breeze amid the leaves, which murmured the burden to their songs.”)

This was a memory of the pine forest near Ravenna,

* *Par.* xxiii. 1.

† *Purg.* xxviii. 13.

THE BIRDS OF DANTE

on the sad sea-shore. Chiassi, mentioned in the next lines, is the Classis of the Romans, a noted harbour.

We must not forget Dante's allusion to the blackbird; when Monna Sapia at Colle saw the defeat of the Sienese who had wronged her, and cried out in reckless defiance:

"Io volsi in su l'ardita faccia,
Gridando a Dio: 'Omai più non te temo,'
come fa il merlo per poca bonaccia."*

("I lifted my face, greatly daring, and cried to
God: 'Now I fear thee no more!' as the blackbird
does when the fair weather comes.")

There is an Italian tradition amongst the country people, that the blackbird cries out at the end of January: "I fear thee no more, O Lord, now that the winter is gone."

Nothing is more striking in the *Divina Commedia* than the marvellous range of Dante's imagination, and the breadth of insight, alike of a poet and a seer, which can picture to us both a Sapia and a Beatrice.

When he awakes after the first night in Purgatory, he tells us that it was

"Nell' ora che comincia i tristi lai
la rondinella presso alla mattina,
forse a memoria de' suoi primi guai."†

("At that hour near the dawn, when the swallow

* *Purg.* xiii. 121.

† *Purg.* ix. 13.

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begins her sad lays, perchance in memory of her ancient woe.")

"Dell' empiezza di lei, che mutò forma
nell' uccel che a cantar più se diletta,
nell' imagine mia apparve l'orma."*

("Of her impiety, who changed her form into
the bird that in singing most delights, there appeared
the traces to my fancy.")

Both these quotations refer to the pitiful story of Procne and Philomela, as it is told by Ovid, whose version our poet follows. Thus Procne becomes a nightingale and Philomela a swallow; while both bewail their wrongs in tuneful song.

In that exquisite second Canto of the *Purgatorio*—when the spirits are brought by the celestial pilot, chanting the psalm of the Exodus, and Casella, the sweet singer, touches all hearts by a song of Dante's own—they are reproved by the "old man venerable," and flee away like startled doves. The simile is thus put forth :

"Come quando, cogliendo liada o loglio,
li colombi adunati alla pastura,
queti senza mostrar l'usato orgoglio,
Se cosa appare ond' elli abbian paura,
subitamente lasciano star l'esca
perchè assaliti son da maggior cura."*

("As doves when gathering wheat or tares, all

* *Purg.* xvii. 19.

† *Purg.* ii. 124.

THE BIRDS OF DANTE

collected at their repast, quietly, without their usual haughtiness, if aught alarm them, straightway leave their food because they are assailed by greater anxiety; so saw I that new company leave the singing, and go towards the hill-side.")

But the most striking occasion when the poet recalls the image of doves is when the two apostles, St. Peter and St. James, meet each other in the starry heaven of the Paradiso.

"Si come quando il colombo si pone
presso al compagno, e l'uno all' altro pande,
girando e mormorando, l'affezione,
Così vid' io l'un dall' altro grande
principe glorioso essere accolto. . . ."

("As when the dove alights near his mate, and one circles round the other, murmuring his love, so did I see one great and glorious prince received by the other. . . .")

The naïve simplicity of this comparison is, to our modern notions, delightfully grotesque. It might be possible to imagine two exquisites of the Court of Louis XIV. strutting forward to meet each other, bowing their heads and preening themselves, perhaps even wheeling round with courtly etiquette, but we cannot conceive such a mode of greeting between two staid and dignified apostles. I think that Dante must have smiled as he wrote the words!

Memories of this affectionate, Dantesque greeting

* *Par.* xxv. 19.

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seem to have haunted some of the mediæval painters in their representation of meetings between ancient patriarchs and saintly apostles.

We bring the story of the poet's birds to an end with one last, and perhaps most beautiful, touch of all. It is that of the lark who stills his song, silent at last, filled with the sweetness of his own melody.

"Quale allodetta che in aere si spazia
prima cantando, e poi tace contento
dell' ultima dolcezza che la sazia,
Tal mi semiò l' imago della impronta
dell eterno piacere, al cui disio
ciascuna cosa, quale ell' è, diventa."*

("Like to the lark that soareth in the air, first singing and then silent with content of the last sweetness that satisfies her; so seemed to me the image stamped by the eternal pleasure, at whose will all lovely things are fashioned.")

* *Par. xx. 73.*

CHAPTER X
PADOVA LA FORTE AND THE
STRADA ROMEA

"Ahi! piaciuto al Dispensatore dell' universo, che la cagione della mia scusa mai non fosse stata; chè nè altri contro a me avria fallato, nè io sofferto avrei pena ingiustamente; pena dico, d'esilio e di povertà."

Conv. i. 3. 15.

("Alas! Would that it had pleased the Ruler of the universe that the occasion of my apology had never been; that neither others had sinned against me, nor that I should have suffered punishment unjustly; the punishment, I say, of exile and poverty.")

CHAPTER X

PADOVA LA FORTE AND THE STRADA ROMEA

WE learn from the *Divina Commedia*, that on the first occasion when Dante went to Verona, it was as the guest of "il gran Lombardo," probably Bartolommeo della Scala, who had succeeded his father Alberto as lord of the city in 1301.

The poet meets his crusading ancestor, Cacciaguida, in the Heaven of Mars, and is told what will befall him.

"Lo primo tuo rifugio e il primo ostello
sarà la cortesia del gran Lombardo,
che in su la scala porta il santo uccello,
Che in te avrà sì benigno riguardo
che del fare e del chieder, tra voi due,
fia primo quel che tra gli altri è più tardo.
Con lui vedrai colui che impresso fue
nascendo sì da questa stella forte,
che notabili fien l'opere sue.
Non se ne son le genti ancora accorte,
per la novella età ; chè pur nove anni
son queste rote intorno di lui torte."*

* *Par.* xvii. 70.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

("Thy first refuge and first hostelry shall be the courtesy of the great Lombard, who on the ladder bears the sacred bird,* for he shall cast on thee such a benign regard, that between you two, the granting shall forerun the asking, unlike the delay which occurs with other men. With him shalt thou see one who at his birth was so stamped with this strong star, that his deeds shall be famous. People have not yet taken much note of him because of his youth, for only nine years have the spheres moved round him.")

This last allusion is to the young Can Grande, brother to Bartolommeo, who was to be the poet's great patron in the years to come. We shall have occasion to describe Verona fully on that later and more important visit, and will therefore pass on now, as Dante cannot have remained here after the month of March 1304, when the government of the city came into the hands of Albuino della Scala, of whom the exile speaks with so much contempt, that he cannot have remained as his guest. There seems every reason to believe that he now went to Padua, whose university would have been a great attraction to him, and where he most likely taught for a time, as he certainly did in later years at Ravenna.

In his writings we have many interesting reminiscences of Padua. Thus the inhabitants are called Antenori, and the Ninth Circle of the Inferno, that awful frozen gulf with tortures unspeakable for traitors, is named by the poet the Antenora, from Antenor

* The Imperial Eagle was really not borne by the Scaligeri at that time.

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the Trojan, betrayer of his country, according to the legend current in the Middle Ages, which Dante believed. Virgil makes no mention of it; he only remarks :

“Antenor from the midst of Grecian hosts
Could pass secure, and pierce th’ Illyrian coasts. . . .
At length he founded Padua’s happy seat,
And gave his Trojans a secure retreat :
There fixed their arms and there renewed their name,
And there in quiet rules, and crowned with fame.”*

If we are familiar with Paduan story, it is not difficult to account for this special interest in the Trojan warrior. It so chanced that in 1274, thirty years before the poet’s visit, a great marble sarcophagus was dug up, in which was found a skeleton of mighty size, still grasping a sword with a rude Latin inscription, from which the excited populace insisted that this was the tomb of Antenor. The sarcophagus was removed to the church of San Lorenzo, and tradition says that Dante lodged with Giotto close by, where the memorial would constantly have reminded him of the story. The church has passed away, but the ancient tomb still stands under a canopy in the open street corner. Modern criticism looks upon it as the burial-place of some Hungarian invader of the ninth century.

To a student of Dante, Padua is the most fascinating of mediæval cities ; it has changed so little since his day, of which we meet memorials at every turn. A grave and learned air still seems to hang about those

* Dryden’s “Virgil.”

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narrow arcaded streets, where eager students from all lands passed up and down to the great "Studio," famous since the beginning of the thirteenth century. We see the ancient palaces of the nobles with their spacious courtyards, and their gardens bright with fountains and statues, some of them cool and fragrant, reaching down to the banks of Bacchiglione. The tall towers and many domes give somewhat of an eastern aspect to the town, indeed the splendid church of San Antonio, with its eighteen cupolas, might almost be mistaken for a mosque. "Il Santo," so called as though there had been none other, died on June 13, 1331, in a little hermitage outside the Porta Codalunga, while reciting a hymn to the Virgin: "O gloriosa Domina. . . ." The citizens of Padua thereupon resolved to build a magnificent temple in his honour, and sent for Niccolo da Pisa to design it.

Amongst other ancient buildings which Dante saw, are the Baptistery, Santa Sofia, and the Palazzo della Ragione, that vast hall, standing entirely upon open arches, which forms one side of the market-place. But most interesting of all is the chapel of Santa Maria dell' Arena, which was built in 1303 by Enrico degli Scrovigni, probably the son of that Rinaldo whom Dante meets with the usurers in the Inferno.

"Ed un, che d'una scrofa azzurra e grossa
segnato avea lo suo sacchetto bianco,
mi disse: 'Che fai tu in questa fossa?
Or te ne va; e perchè se' vivo anco,
sappi che il mio vicin Vitaliano
sederà qui dal mio sinistro fianco.' " *

* *Inf.* xvii. 64.



A. H. Andrews

HERALDIC ARMS IN POPPI CASTLE

PADOVA LA FORTE, ETC.

("And one who bore a sow azure stamped on his sculp argent, said to me: 'What art thou doing in this pit? Away with thee, and as thou art still alive, know that my neighbour Vitaliano shall sit here at my left side.'")

"Con questi Fiorentin son Padovano. . . ."

("I am a Paduan, with these Florentines.")

How even in the depths of the *Inferno* do we find that undying pride in his fatherland, with which a lost soul proclaims himself to have been "a citizen of no mean city." But still more striking is the passion for heraldry which Dante displays. In this very canto, where the sinners are found sitting all crouched up, tears gushing from their eyes, each of them actually has a purse, stamped with his own armorial bearings, hanging round his neck! The poet appears to take a special pride in the accuracy with which he describes the heraldic arms of every noble he comes across, pausing to use the exact terms, alike amid the tortures of hell, in the shadows of purgatory and even when absorbed in the rapture of heaven. He was a born aristocrat in spite of all his theology, his science and his philosophy. And yet in his teaching, notably in certain pages of the *Convivio*, how magnificently he rises above these prejudices for birth and rank, and declares triumphantly that virtue is the only true nobility.

On the Ponte San Lorenzo the house is still pointed out with reverence where Dante is said to have lived, and there seems no reason to doubt the legend that Dante watched Giotto at work on the wonderful frescoes in the Arena Chapel, said to have been painted

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in the year 1306 or a little earlier. We have documentary evidence that the poet was in Padua at this date, for his name occurs as witness to an agreement signed on August 27, 1306. The faded parchment with this contract was found amongst the archives of Count Papafava, and contains these words :

"Fuit e testimoniis Dantinus de Alighieriis, qui nunc habitat Patavii, in contracta Sancti-Laurentii."

Giotto was chosen by Enrico degli Scrovigni not only to build the chapel but to cover the walls with his paintings. Here he sets forth the legend of Mary and the life of Christ, in a series of striking scenes, full of beauty and simple pathos, for he had "learned the secret of giving the semblance of flesh and blood reality to Christian thought. . . . He spoke to men who could not read, for whom there were no printed pages, but whose heart received his teaching through the eye." On the wall over the entrance to the chapel, from the green courtyard beyond, we can still trace his *Last Judgment*, but in this he does not seem to have been much influenced by the ideas of his friend Dante. At that time he could not, of course, have seen any part of the *Divina Commedia*, as the cantos of the *Inferno* were not finished until 1316, some eight years later. It is true that some of his guilty souls are plunged head foremost into a fiery gulf, and others wear the tonsure ; whilst some writers hold that there are points of contact in the subjects of the frescoes—the three Theological Virtues and four Ethical, spoken of as stars in the *Purgatorio* : the Marriage in Cana ("Vinum no habent" of the Virgin), the treachery of Judas ("Giuda Scariotto, che il capo ha dentro, e fuor

PADOVA LA FORTE, ETC.

le gambe mena"), and also in the figure of Inconstancy whirling round upon the Wheel of Fortune :

"Con l'altre prime creature lieta
volve sua spera, e beata si gode."*

("With other glad primal creatures she revolves
her sphere and enjoys her happiness.")

In another ancient church of Padua, that of the Eremitani, the frescoes of the Paduan painter, Guariento, in their mystical and allegorical character, show much more strongly the influence of the great poet. Thus in the choir we see the seven planets represented by the side of the Passion and the Resurrection ; the different signs of the zodiac are placed near the figures who represent each planet, which vividly recalls to us Dante's constant insistence in reminding us, at each step of his journey, in which sign of the zodiac the sun is to be found.

There is every reason to believe that during Dante's stay at Padua, as in later days at Ravenna, he earned an honourable living by teaching at the great university. He had already the reputation of being one of the most prominent scholars of his time, and it is most improbable that his work as a professor of poetry and of language should not have begun until towards the close of his life at Ravenna. When Bologna expelled all the Ghibellines on March 1, 1306, there were many professors and students amongst them, who took refuge in Bologna, and continued their profession at

* *Inf.* vii. 96.

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the rival university. We have no direct information on the subject, but it is quite possible that this influx of new teachers may have had some influence in inducing the poet to try his fortunes elsewhere, for we have positive evidence that he had left Padua before the month of October in that year.

Amongst the Paduans whom he mentions in the *Divina Commedia*, the most notorious is the tyrant Ezzelino III. da Romano, of most evil repute. He is discovered in that Circle of the Inferno where the violent are plunged in blood, of which they had shed so much in their lives. Nessus the Centaur points out Ezzelino, calling special notice to his black hair.

“E il gran Centauro disse : ‘Ei son tiranni
che dier nel sangne e nell’ aver di piglio. . . .
E quella fronte ch’ha il pel così nero
è Azzolino. . . .’”*

(“ And the great Centaur said : ‘These are tyrants
who took to bloodshed and pillage . . . and that
brow which has such black hair is Azzolino. . . .’”)

Evidently Dante had forgotten all political considerations, for this Ezzelino III. was an ardent Ghibelline and leader of that faction in Northern Italy until his death in 1259. Ampère says of him :

“Le souvenir d’Ezzelino semble planer sur l’enceinte vaste et solitaire de Padoue. On dirait que depuis lui elle n’a pas été repeuplée. Il me semblait sentir la présence invisible de ce redoutable mort, quand j’errais

* *Inf.* xii. 109.

PADOVA LA FORTE, ETC.

le soir, dans les quartiers écartés et les rues silencieuses . . . m'enfonçant sous de longs portiques et longeant des rues interminables."

Dante also meets Cunizza, the sister of this Ezzelino, and to our great surprise, when we know her story, she is placed in the *Paradiso*; the region of the planet Venus is the home of her who thought the word well lost for love :

" In quella parte della terra prava
 Italica, che siede tra Rialto
 e le fontane di Brenta e di Piava,
Si leve un colle, e non surge molt' alto,
 là donde scese già una facella,
 che fece alla contrada un grande assalto.
D' una radice nacqui ed io ed ella ;
 Cunizza fui chiamata, e qui refulgo,
 perchè mi vinse il lume d' esta stella.
Ma lietamente a me medesma indulgo
 la cagion di mia sorte, e non mi noia,
 che parria forse forte al vostro vulgo." *

(" In that part of the depraved Italian land which lies between Rialto and the springs of Brenta and Piave, there rises a hill of no great height, from whence there once came down a firebrand that made a great assault upon the country.† I sprang out of the same root; Cunizza, am I called, and here I shine because the light of this star overcame me. But, joyfully, self-pardoning, I bear what caused my fate, nor does it grieve me, which may perhaps seem a hard saying to most people.")

* *Par.* ix. 25.

† Ezzelino III.

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The story of Cunizza—her guilty love for the troubadour Sordello, and her subsequent much-chequered life—is well known. But in her latter years she showed great charity and compassion; amongst other good deeds giving freedom to all her slaves. This occurred in Florence in Dante's lifetime, and he appears to have been much impressed by her penitence, and that "charity which covers the multitude of sins." He looks upon her as a Magdalene, "whose sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."

With his keen interest in rivers, he cannot leave Padua without mentioning the Brenta, which joins the Bacchiglione just below the town, and has embankments built as a protection against its floods.

"Per difender lor ville e lor castelli."*

In describing the embankments of the river Phlegethon in Hell, he points out that "they were not so high nor so wide" as these.

Passing out through the dark gateway, "the road mounts an embankment above the Brenta, and runs between the river and the broad plain, which stretches to the north in endless lines of mulberry and maize. The Brenta flows slowly, but strongly; a muddy volume of yellowish water, that neither hastens nor slackens, but glides heavily between its monotonous banks, with here and there a short babbling eddy twisted for an instant into its opaque surface, and vanishing. . . . Dusty and shadeless, the road fares along the dyke on its northern side; and the tall tower of Dolo is seen

* *Inf.* xv. 7.

PADOVA LA FORTE, ETC.

trembling in the heat-mist far away, and never seems nearer than it did at first." *

As we see from this quotation, Ruskin shares with the great master his intimate caressing love for a river. He also takes occasion here to point out the wonderful mathematical accuracy with which Dante maps out and properly surveys his *Inferno*, as contrasted with the vagueness of Milton, with whom all is wild and fenceless within those gates of despair; his rivers flowing through a waste of mountain and moorland, by "many a frozen and many a fiery Alp."

But Dante would have us grasp in every minute detail an exact image of his city of Dis, and so anxious is he that we should make no mistake, that when he tells us the embankment of the river Phlegethon is like unto "those of Ghent and Bruges against the sea, or those in Lombardy which bank the Brenta," he adds carefully, "only not so high nor so wide" † as those. His incisive keenness of vision makes these little touches so real that the imagination is taken captive, and as in the case of our own "Pilgrim's Progress," we are ready to believe the impossible.

We feel that Dante must have left Padua with regret, for there was much in sympathy with his austere spirit within those ancient walls, and if the legend is true that he would stand and watch Giotto at his work in the Arena, it was hard to part from so congenial a friend. He may have received a definite invitation from the Malaspini of Lunigiana, as the fact that, on his arrival there, he was immediately entrusted with an important mission might imply that his host had some previous

* Ruskin,

† *Inf.* xv. 11.

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knowledge of him. In any case he appears to have set his face steadily in that direction, without much loitering by the way, for he signs one document in Padua on August 27, 1306, and another in the Lunigiana on October 27 of the same year.

As we turn away from Padova la Forte, one last look is due to that fair city, with its many towers and lofty cupolas rising with stately charm against the blue sky, buried in gardens and vineyards and girdled in part by the Euganean hills, that name of haunting music! Our road lies across the broad valley of the Po, that monarch of rivers, born far away in Piedmont on the slopes of Monte Veso, "l'alpestre rocce, di che, Po tu labi." Crossing the whole of Italy in majestic pomp, with his retinue of attendant tributaries, at length he finds peace in the shining waters of the Adriatic.

"Sulla marina dove il Po discende
Per aver pace co' seguaci sui." *

("On the shore where the Po descends to have
peace, with his retinue [of streams])."

Once more we reach Mantua, encircled with her chain of silvery lakes, where the shallow blue water ripples amid the rushes, and on the banks beyond rustling aspens and poplars quiver in the breeze. A golden mist hangs over the sedgy marshes and sea of fields, and the whole broad dim scene has a charm of airy vastness. Passing onward by the river side to

* *Inf.* v. 98.

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Governola, the ancient Governo, we see the slow-flowing Mincio fall into the waters of the Po.

“Tosto che l’acqua a correr mette co
non più Benaco, ma Mincio si chiama
fino a Governo, dove cade in Po.

Non molto ha corso, che trova una lama
nella qual si distende e la impaluda,
e suol di state talora esser grama.” *

The Mincio rising from the Lake of Garda, the Benacus of Dante, becomes a river passing down through green pastures, then : “As soon as the water sets forth running, it is no longer named Benacus but Mincio—at Governo it falls into the Po. It has not flowed far before it finds a level on which it spreads and makes thereof a marsh, and is wont to be pestilential in summer.”

This description is so clear and accurate that we cannot doubt the poet passed this way. Continuing our journey through this land of streams we cross the little river Crostola, once a boundary of the Modena territory, to Brescello, which is now on the right bank of the Po, but was formerly on the left, for the river has changed its channel, and the old course is now called il Po Morto. One more torrent, the Enza, to skirt, and we are soon within sight of the great Lombard towers and Campanile of Parma where Dante would find a shelter, as the city was faithful to the Ghibelline cause.

On the façade of the grand old Duomo, where

* *Inf.* xx, 76.

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colossal lions of rosy red marble guard the portal, there is carved a mystic allegory which surely delighted the soul of Dante. In the keystone of the arch, the sun reigns supreme with the months and their emblems on either side; then over the lintel we have that favourite Lombard device, the hunting of the soul by the devil in full pursuit.

The splendid Baptistery was finished in 1281, after a delay of many years, when the tyrant Ezzelino da Romano forbade the builders to seek their red marble from Venetian quarries. As in "il mio bel San Giovanni" of Florence, every child born in Parma is brought here for baptism.

In connection with this city, Dante tells us of a certain Maestro Benvenuto, who bore the nickname of Asdente (toothless), a shoemaker who was also famous as a prophet and soothsayer in the later part of the thirteenth century. He is met with in the dark valley of Maleboge, amongst those who tampered with divination, and whose punishment is to go round and round in silence and weeping, walking and looking backward, because in this life they tried to look in advance too far.

"Vedi Asdente,
che avere inteso al cuoio ed allo spago
ora vorrebbe, ma tarda si pente."*

("See Asdente, who would wish now that he had
attended to his leather and his cord, but repents too
late.")

"Asdente, il calzolaio di Parme," is also alluded to

* *Inf.* xx. 118.

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in the *Convito*, as an instance of one who would be noble if nobility were the same thing as notoriety. This cobbler is said to have foretold the defeat of Frederick II. at the siege of Parma. He is mentioned in the extremely interesting chronicle of his fellow citizen and contemporary, Salimbene of Parma. The Emperor Frederick II. built a fortress over against the town of Parma during the siege, but Dante tells of its being surprised and taken by the men of Parma during the Emperor's absence out hunting.*

As we continue our journey from Parma to Sarzana, in the Lunigiana, we find ourselves upon an ancient highway which was much frequented in mediæval times by travellers from beyond the Alps who were going to Rome; for this reason it was called Strada Romea. A branch of the Via Clodia was once carried across this pass of the Apennines. By Genoa to the west, or by Bologna to the east, would appear to have been the alternative routes. We have therefore every reason to believe that this was the road chosen by Dante on his way to the home of the Malaspini.

Skirting the hills which bound the valley of the Taro, we see that river mingle with the waters of the Ceno, at the ancient town of Fornuovo, full of Roman remains, at the very foot of the Apennines. After this the road quickly ascends and crosses a spur of the Apennines which divides the Taro and Bagnanza valleys, until it reaches the village of Berceto, and then by a steep ascent goes up over the wild and desolate Cisa pass. As we descend on the other side we find ourselves in the Lunigiana, and follow by the

* Epistola vi.

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right bank of the river, broad and clear—the famous Macra, the dividing line between Tuscany and Lombardy.

“E Macra, che, per cammin corto,
lo Genovese parte dal Toscano.” *

(“The Macra, which by a short way divides the
Genoese from Tuscany.”)

We soon reach Pontremoli, doubtless so called from the old “Pons Tremulous,” over the Macra, and find ourselves in the midst of mediæval towers, once fiercely contested for, again and again, as the key of the much used and important pass over the Apennines.

* *Par.* ix. 89.

CHAPTER XI
IN THE LUNIGIANA

“ La fama che la vostra casa onora
grida i signori e grida la contrada,
sì che ne sa chi non vi fu ancora.”

Purg. viii. 124.

(“The fame that honours your house proclaims
the nobles and proclaims the land, so that he
knows it who was never there.”)

CHAPTER XI

IN THE LUNIGIANA

WITH regard to the various castles in the Lunigiana where Dante dwelt during his exile we have no certain knowledge, but the Marchese Franceschino Malaspina of Sarzana is believed to have been his first host. On the way thither he may have halted at Filattiera, between Pontremoli and Villafranca, where there is a grand old mediæval fortress, from whence that Gherardino da Filattiera, spoken of later in *Epistola viii.* as "*Lunensis Pontifex*," took his name. Of this branch of the family, who were Guelfs, Boccaccio tells some curious stories.

At Mulazzo, a tower and house still bear the name of the poet, and he was doubtless a guest in the great castle of Fosdinovo, that rugged mountain town, the watch-tower of the Garfagnana, whose battlemented walls were of no avail against the might of Castruccio. But Sarzana was the great stronghold of the Malespina family, and here would have been the chief abode of Dante, whose writings show so familiar a knowledge of all that region of the Val di Macra.

Sarzana, long called Luna Nova, is an ancient fortified town with massive walls and gates, strangely mediæval in appearance, for the tide of centuries

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seems to have passed over and left it unchanged. The church of San Francesco, still served by Franciscan friars, remains as it was in the days when Dante heard Mass here. In the deep shadows, high up on the transept wall, there is a beautiful monument to a young son of Castruccio Castracane, the great lord and warrior, who was a contemporary of the poet. In some respects it is curiously like the famous tomb of Can Grande at Verona, with the same delicate columns and bold arched canopy. Here we have a curly-headed child as the central figure, but instead of the knight on his war-horse above, there are celestial guards of saints and angels, and the canopy over his sleeping figure is held back by two fair boys who might have been his playfellows.

On the wall opposite there is a fine old recumbent monument to one of the Malespini, probably a bishop of Luna, as the episcopal see was not transferred to Sarzana until the year 1465.

The Duomo has a grand façade and tower, and is built of white marble from the quarries of Carrara. To add to the charm of Sarzana, with its picturesque narrow streets and market-place, and massive grey towers, it lies in the midst of rich and beautiful country. Flowing below it is that classic river, the Macra, which divides Tuscany from the territory of Genoa.

"E Macra che, per cammin corto
Lo Genovese parte dal Toscano." *

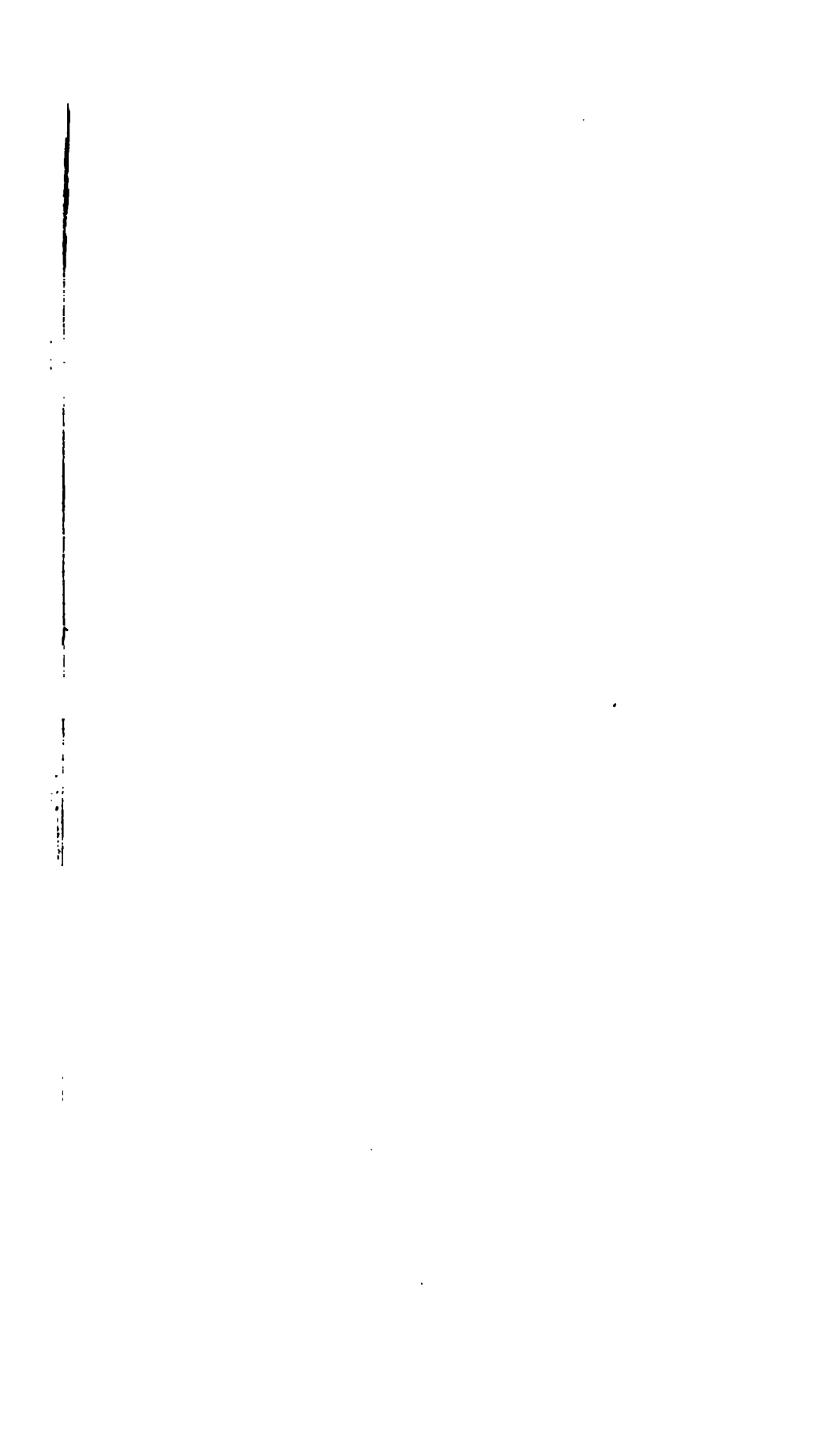
What a touch of reality is this, to paint the brief

* *Par.* ix. 89.



A. P. Andrews

SARZANA



IN THE LUNIGIANA

course of the river, which is said to be one of the shortest in Italy, although it has a delta three miles in width.

In connection with the Malespini, lords of Lunigiana, and their much fighting, Dante remarks :

“Tragge Marte vapor di Val di Magra
ch'è di torbidi nuvoli involuto,
e con tempesta impetuosa ed agra. . . .”*

(“Mars bears a mist from Val di Magra, which is surrounded by turbid clouds, and with a storm tempestuous and bitter. . . .”)

Villani describes how the Macra rushes down from the Apennines, and falls into the sea beyond Luna beneath the mountain “del Corvo.”

By many allusions in the *Divina Commedia*, we learn how familiar Dante became with all this neighbourhood, during his stay in the Lunigiana. From Sarzana we go forth in his footsteps to seek that ancient Luna, queen and mother of the later town, the most northern stronghold of the Etruscans in those days of old when they ruled the land and harried the men of Rome.

On such another spring morning as when the poet passed this way, we follow by the left bank of the Macra for awhile, and then cross the fertile plain covered with a tangled luxuriance of rank vegetation. The dews hang heavy on the lush herbage, the vivid green spears of young corn and the broad fields of tall lupins with their waving plumes of snowy blossom.

* *Inf.* xxiv. 145.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

As we breathe the moist, oppressive air, sultry and motionless, even on an April day, we can well believe that Guido Cavalcanti, the exiled friend of Dante, here laid the seeds of mortal illness in that fatal July of the year 1300.

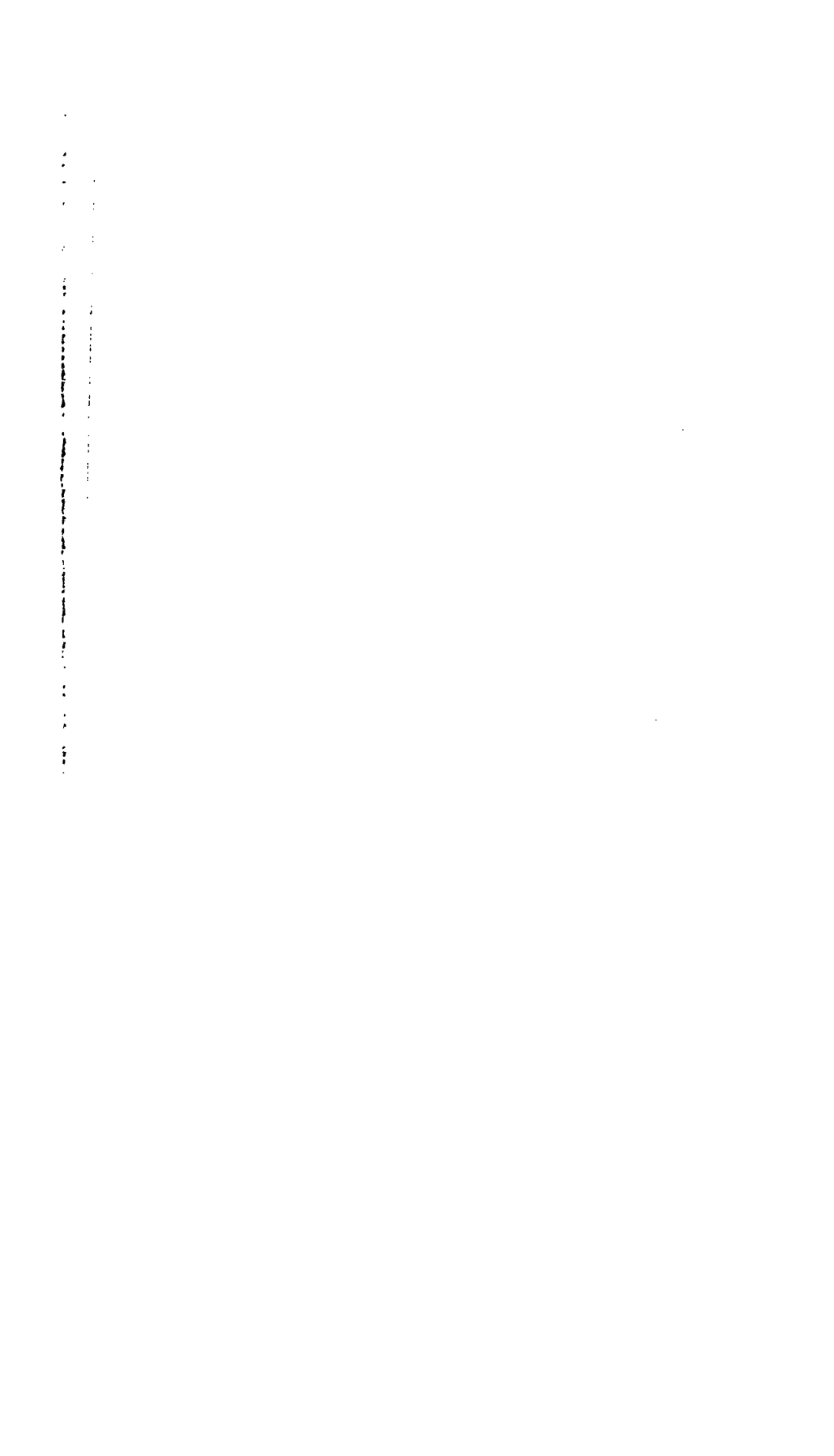
But never did the eye rejoice in a fairer scene. On all sides there is a glamour of flowering trees—one heaving mass of bloom, looking from afar like the white foam-line that scatters spray along the sea-shore. In the nearer foreground the almond flowers flush rosy red, a vision entrancing against the misty blue-purple hills which rise crowned with tower and campanile and cypress grove, in ragged outline against the snowy mountains beyond Carrara. Far away to the left we distinguish the small hill-towns of Nicola and Orto Nuova, while to the right is Ameglia on its rocky height, dimly seen through the gauze of mid-day heat. Onwards we pass, through vineyards where the plants are trained from tree to tree and fall in festoons, making alcoves and bowers where the autumn grapes will swell and ripen. Then of a sudden the narrow grassy way leads us into a lonely farmyard, where, amid the tangled briers, we find the first traces of that once illustrious Luna, the pride of old Etruria which once defied the rising might of Rome. Here we discover a few foundations of ruined marble palace and massive fort, while within the farm building is a little hoard of broken statues, and columns, and well-nigh illegible inscriptions.

A few bare-footed children of the *contadina*, gazing at us in big-eyed wonder, fill the place of a bygone Etruscan camp and court! To this has fallen the greatness and glory of Luna!



A. W. Andrews

AMPHITHEATRE, LUNA



IN THE LUNIGIANA

Yet we have not seen all, for the site of the city must have covered many acres, and much of it is doubtless buried beneath the soil. A little rippling stream crosses the road, and for stepping-stones we have broken fragments of white marble capital and column. Half a mile away—by a rough path through the lush flowering meadows—at length we come abruptly upon the grey ruin of a noble amphitheatre, buried amongst sun-steeped vineyards and pink almond blossom. It is a marvellous relic of the past, of supreme interest ; a smaller edition of that of Verona. The concentric walls of the surrounding corridors are well preserved in many places, with semi-circular arches still remaining ; and we can trace the four central openings half hidden by a tangled mass of brier, while in one entrance a row of young birches stand sentinel, proud and lustrous in the sunshine.

It was a moment to be enshrined in the memory, when the ancient Coliseum of Luna rose revealed before us, that monument of strong possession and savage luxury—and we stood face to face with the past.

The faint sound of bells, borne on the wind from a distant campanile, serves but to accentuate the perfect quiet and stillness of the dead city. We are told that once, and not so long ago, Luna was on the sea-shore, half buried in the sands. The river Macra, in its short rapid course, must have brought down much *débris* from the hills, and made thus a broad, fertile delta.

Luna appears to have been far advanced on her downward course in the days of Lucan, who remarks :

“ Arruns incoluit desertæ mœnia Lunæ.”

DANTE THE WAYFARER

With regard to the decay of the ancient city, Dante says :

“ Se tu riguardi Luni ed Urbisaglia
come son ite, e come se ne vanno
di retro ad esse Chiusi e Sinigaglia ;
Udir come le schiatte si disfanno
non ti parrà nuova cosa nè forte
poscia che le cittadi termine hanno.” *

(“ If thou lookest at Luni and Urbisaglia, how they have perished, and how Chiusi and Sinigaglia are following them ; it will not seem a new or strange thing that families come to destruction, since even cities have their term.”)

Luni is also mentioned by Dante with regard to the soothsayer Aruns, alluded to above.

“ Aronto è quel che al ventre gli s' atterga,
che nei monti di Luni, dove ronca
lo Carrarese che di sotto alberga,
Ebbe tra i bianchi marmi la spelonca
per sua dimora ; onde a guardar le stelle
e il mar non gli era la veduta tronca.” *

(“ That is Aruns coming back before him, who dwells in the mountains of Luna, where dig the Carrarese who live beneath ; amongst the white marbles he had the cave for his abode ; from whence he could look upon the stars and the sea with unbroken view.”)

The quarries of Carrara were worked in early times

* *Par.* xvi. 73.

† *Inf.* xx. 46.

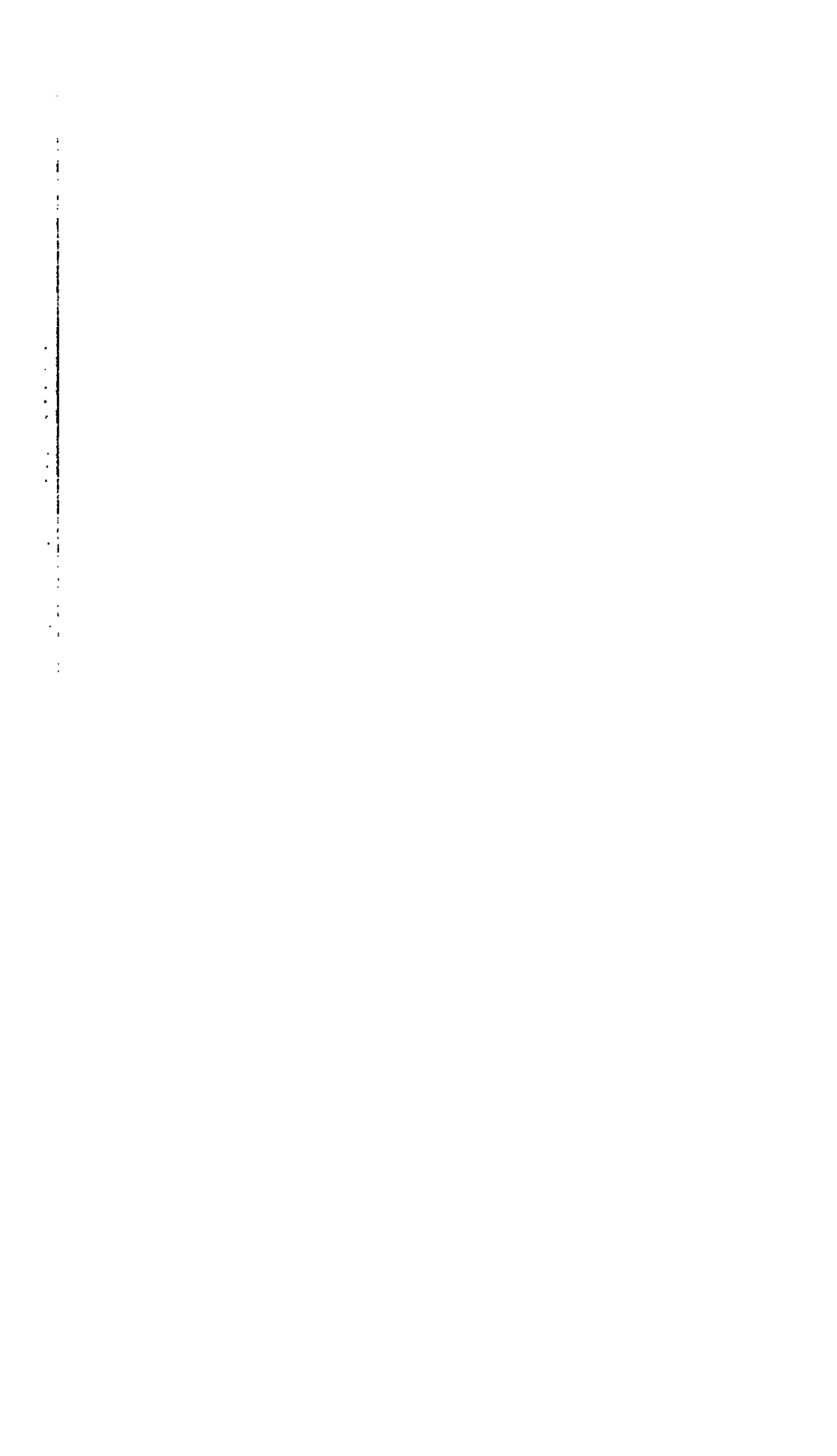


LUNA



A. W. Andrews

CHIUSI



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and were highly esteemed for their beautiful white marble, of which the Pantheon, the Pyramid of Cestius, &c., were built. Villani gives an interesting account of the city of Luna in his chronicles, and adds a most curious reason why that barren, inhospitable shore was in his day "so desert and unhealthy." "The cause why these cities of the coast are almost without inhabitants and unhealthy . . . is said by the great masters of astronomy to be because of the movement of the eighth sphere of heaven, which in every hundred years moves one degree towards the North Pole, and thus it will move 15° in 1500 years, and afterwards will turn back in like manner if it be the pleasure of God that the world shall endure so long. . . ." *

In the days of Dante, this forlorn Luna was yet the seat of an episcopal see, for the mission on which he was engaged was no less than arranging a treaty of peace between Antonio, Archbishop of Luna, on the one side, and the Malaspini on the other—probably Franceschino, Moroello III., and Currado II.—to end a long series of feuds between them. The document is written in old law Latin, and has a very curious preamble, which Dean Plumptre points out as specially Dantesque; and in which the "thoughts, hopes and dreams of the ideal polity of the Monarchia are embodied."

"Taking into account that tranquillity ought to be the desire of every kingdom, seeing that by her nations grow to completeness, and all useful arts are maintained, and that she, as the mother of all good acts,

* Villani, i. 50.

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repairs the losses of the human race by a restorative succession, increases all the facilities of life, raises manners to a higher culture, whose virtues scarce can worthily be acknowledged, the Lords and Bishops aforesaid, glorying in the leisurely tranquillity and the calm and peaceful amenities of life in their subjects and followers, and guided by the grace of our Most High Lord and Saviour, do hereby enter into the aforesaid peace for true and perpetual concord."

Surely peace was never wooed in more stately language!

The poet had a very sincere affection for the Malaspina family, on which he dwells when he meets their predecessor, Currado II., in the Antipurgatorio, who thus speaks:

" Cominciò ella: ' Se novella vera
di Valdimacra o di parte vicina
sai, dilla a me, che già grande là era.
Chiamato fui Corrado Malaspina:
non son l'antico, ma di lui discesi;
a'miei portai l'amor che qui raffina.'
' O,' diss' io lui, ' per li vostri paesi
 giammai non fui; ma dove sì dimora
per tutta Europa, ch' ei non sien palesi?
La fama che la vostra casa onora
grida i signori e gridà la contrada,
sì che ne sa chi non vi fu ancora.
Ed io vi giuro, s'io di sopra vada,
che vostra gente onrata non si sfregia
del pregio della borsa e della spada.
Uso e natura sì la privilegia,
che, perchè il capo reo lo mondo torca,
sola va dritta, e il mal cammin dispregia.'

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Ed egli: 'Or va, chè il sol non si ricorca
sette volte nel letto che il Montone
con tutti e quattro i piè copra ed inforca,
Che cotesta cortese opinione
ti fia chiavata in mezzo della testa
con maggior chiovi che d'altrui sermone,
Se corso di giudizio non s'arresta.' * *

("He began: 'If you have any certain news of Valdimacra and the neighbouring parts, tell it me who once was mighty there. I was called Corrado Malaspina: I am not the elder, but am descended from him. The love I bore my people is here purified.' 'Oh,' said I to him, 'I have never been through your lands; but throughout Europe, where do men dwell to whom they are not famous? The glory which honours your house proclaims the nobles and proclaims the land, so that he knows of it who was never there.

"And I swear to you, by my hope of heaven, that your honoured race does not impair the value of her purse and of her sword. Custom and nature give her such privileges that while the world is set awry by a guilty head, she alone walks aright and scorns the path of evil.'

"And he: 'Now depart, for the sun goes not seven times to rest in the bed which Aries covers with four feet, before this courteous opinion shall be nailed into the middle of thy head, with bigger nails than the words of other men, if the course of judgment be not stayed.'"

These last sentences absolutely fix the date of Dante's

* *Purg.* viii. 115.

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visit to the Lunigiana ; Easter of the year 1300 being the ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*, seven years not quite accomplished would bring it to October 1306, the time when the poet signed, as procurator, the famous treaty. In this the name of Moroello Malaspina is mentioned. He married Alagia de' Fieschi, the niece of Pope Adrian V., who is met with in the Purgatorio amongst those who are expiating the sin of avarice. He makes a wistful allusion to Alagia, perhaps in the hope of obtaining her prayers.

“Nepote ho io di là ch'ha nome Alagia,
buona da sè, pur che la nostra casa
non faccia lei per esempio malvagia ;
E questa sola di là m'è rimasa.” *

(“On earth I have a granddaughter named Alagia,
good in herself, unless indeed our house corrupts
her by its evil example, and she alone remains to me
yonder.”)

At this point in the travels of Dante we are met by a most interesting tradition, which it is not for me to accept or reject, but I will tell the story as it is told by Benvenuto, Boccaccio and other old chroniclers. At the time when the poet was the guest of the Moroello Malaspina last spoken of, it so chanced that away in his distant home at Florence, his wife Gemma had occasion to have search made in a certain strong-box. Here, amongst the legal documents which she required, many canzoni and sonnets in her husband's handwriting were

* *Purg.* xix. 142.

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found, and at last a small book was discovered containing the first seven cantos of the *Divina Commedia*. Here there arises a slight discrepancy in the various accounts, for Andrea Poggi, a nephew of Dante, and one Dino Perini, a friend of his, both claim the honour of having found the precious book.

However this may be, the poem was shown to Dino Frescobaldi, a noted man of letters, who sent the seven cantos, not to Dante himself, but to his host, Moroello Malaspina, begging him to persuade the poet to continue this great work. Boccaccio thus continues the tale:

"And when the Marchese, a man of much understanding, had seen them and much praised them, he showed them to Dante . . . and besought him to be pleased not to leave so lofty a beginning without its due conclusion." Whereupon Dante replies that with all his troubles of exile, he had "wholly abandoned the lofty phantasy," but ". . . I will seek to call again to memory my first intent, and will proceed therewith as grace shall be given me." Boccaccio points out that the eighth canto begins plainly with a joining on of the interrupted work:

"Io dico, seguitando, che assai prima. . . ."*

"Recommencing then his glorious work, Dante did not bring it to a close, as many might think, without breaking it off; but many a time, according as the gravity of the chance that befell him required, sometimes for months, sometimes for years, he left it where it was, unable to do aught for it."†

Yes; the great work may at times have seemed to

* *Inf.* viii. 1.

† Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

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pause during the poet's long and lonely wanderings, but meanwhile it was surely and secretly growing to slow perfection in his soul. In imagination we can see Dante in his black soutane, and the leathern belt from which hung his ink-horn and pen-case linked together by a little chain, with his tablets ever ready at hand to note down an image or a vivid impression, as he passed in silence through the land. Thus he would garner up many a treasure in store for the peaceful days when, in some quiet monastic cell or scriptorium of a feudal castle, he could write out on parchment the wonderful Terza Rima of his *Commedia* in crystalline clearness, "definite, restrained, with the forceful onward march as of serried troops in burnished coats of glittering steel."

It would be to the period of Dante's stay in the Lunigiana that we must refer the letter attributed to Frate Ilario—so much debated and fought over—and yet of which the latest writers on the poet's life can say that its rejection is a "judgment too hasty and too confident." *

In any case it is a delightful tradition, so Dantesque in feeling and with so dramatic an air of truthfulness, that we cannot omit it from our story. On the borders of the Lunigiana, above the west bank of the Macra, on the headland called Del Corvo, below Monte Marcello, a misty purple hill which can be seen from the site of ancient Luna, stood the Benedictine monastery of Santa Croce, now a ruin. Probably some time in the spring of 1309, a pilgrim climbed the slope and presented himself at the gate, where he was received

* Dante and Del Virgilio (Wicksteed & Gardner).

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by Frate Ilario, who thus writes with regard to the meeting :

"To his most worthy and noble lord, Uguccone della Faggiuola, pre-eminent among the nobles of Italy, Frate Ilario, a humble monk of the Corvo, in the gorge of the Magra, sendeth greeting in Him who is the true salvation. . . . When this man was on his way to lands north of the Alps, and was passing through the diocese of Luni . . . he visited our monastery. As I saw that he was unknown to myself and the brethren, I questioned him of what he wanted, and seeing that he answered nought but looked around at the convent walls, I asked him again what he desired. Thereat he looked round at me and the brethren who were with me and answered, 'Peace.' This making me more eager to know of what condition was the man, I withdrew him from the rest and after talk with him knew that it was Dante. Though before that day I had never seen him, yet his fame had reached me. . . . And when he learnt my affection for his works, he with a manner of frank courtesy took out a manuscript from his bosom and placed it courteously in my hands.

"Behold," said he, "a part of my work which it may be you have not seen. Such a memorial I leave with you that you keep your memory of me fresh."* Frate Ilario goes on to say that this was the *Inferno*, just completed, and tells of a conversation on the language in which it was written and other matters.

It has been suggested as plausible that Dante, having made up his mind to leave Italy for France, may have wished to leave the manuscript which he had already

* Boccaccio.

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written in safe hands. Boccaccio tells us that it was his wont, "whenever he had done six or eight cantos, more or less, to send them from whatever place he was in. . . ."

In those days of perilous journeys, the only security was to travel in the guise of a pilgrim with no worldly possessions, and even a roll of parchment was not safe from covetous eyes.

Various reasons have been assigned for this journey to Paris; Villani simply mentions the fact, while Boccaccio says: "When he saw the way of return (to Florence) closed up on every side, and day by day his hope became more vain, he abandoned not only Tuscany but Italy herself, and passing the mountains that divide her from the province of Gaul, he made his way as best he might to Paris; and there he gave himself to the study of philosophy and of theology, gathering unto himself again such part of the other sciences also as perchance had been lost. . . ."

As for the route which he took, it will be interesting to trace it out from indications in the *Divina Commedia*.

"Tra Lerici e Turbia, la più diserta
la più romita via è una scala
verso di quella, agevole ed aperta."†

Dante here compares the rugged and broken rocks between Lerici, on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Spezia, and Turbia, below Monaco, to the precipitous rocks at the foot of the Purgatorial Mount. There was no Cornice road in his day, "and the steep precipices and promontories were then probably traversed by

* Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed. † *Purg.* iii. 49.



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"TRA LERICI E TURBIA"

1

2

3

IN THE LUNIGIANA

footpaths which, as they necessarily passed in many places over crumbling and slippery limestone, were doubtless not a little dangerous." Of places mentioned by Dante along that Mediterranean coast, so familiar to all travellers in Italy, we find :

"Intra Sestri e Chiaveri si adima
una fiumana bella, e del suo nome
lo titol del mio sangue fa sua cima." *

("Between Sestri and Chiaveri flows down a fair river, and from its name the title of my race takes its origin.")

The speaker is Pope Adrian V., who is met in Purgatory, amidst the avaricious. His name was Ottobuono de' Fieschi of Genoa, and the river to which he alludes is the little Lavagna, from whence the Fieschi family took the title of Counts of Lavagna.

A tragic figure, this Adrian, from whose lips the cup of supreme greatness was dashed ere he had tasted it, for he was Pope in name but little more than a month, and died at Viterbo, August 16, 1276, ere the triple tiara had been placed upon his brow.

Along this wild and craggy coast the pilgrim made his way, passing by the little grey towns each clinging to a rocky slope or nestling below on the sandy shore ; with many a robber castle, and ancient belfry and lighthouse tower ; while through the olive slopes glitter the sun-kissed ripples of the blue Mediterranean.

* *Purg.* xix. 100.

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Winding among riven rocks, chequered by straggling pine-trees, high above the waves which break against the foot of the precipice below, at length the beautiful harbour of Genova la Superba break on the view.

On the inhabitants of this famous city Dante appears to have looked with unfriendly eyes; he denounces them as evil and corrupt men, and even complains that their dialect is harsh and displeasing. But his chief indignation is directed against a certain great lord, Branca d'Oria, of the reigning Ghibelline family of Genoa. Him, the poet places in the darkest pit of the uppermost Inferno, amongst those who were traitors to their own friends and guests, and whose fearful sentence it was that they should go down *quick* (living still) into Hell! This d'Oria had broken every law of kinship and hospitality, for he had courteously invited his father-in-law, Michel Zanche, to a banquet, and had then cruelly murdered him.

“ Egli è Ser Branca d'Oria ; ‘ e son più anni
poscia passati ch'ei fu sì racchiuso.’
‘ Io credo,’ dissi lui, ‘ che tu m'inganni :
chè Branca d'Oria non morì unquanche,
e mangia e bee e dorme e veste panni.’
‘ Nel fosso su,’ diss' ei, ‘ di Malebranche,
là dove bolle la tenace pece,
non era giunto ancora Michel Zanche,
Che questi lasciò il diavolo in sua vece
nel corpo suo, e d'un suo prossimano
che il tradimento insieme con lui fece. . . .’
Ahi, Genovesi, uomini diversi
d'ogni costume, e pien d'ogni magagna,
perchè non siete voi del mondo spersi? ”

IN THE LUNIGIANA

Chè col peggiore spirito di Romagna
trovai un tal di voi, che per sua opra
in anima in Cocito già si bagna,
Ed in corpo par vivo ancor di sopra.”*

“In the Ptolomea they point out one: ‘It is Ser Branca d’Oria; and many years have passed since he was thus imprisoned.’ ‘I believe,’ said I to him, ‘that thou deceivest me: for Branca d’Oria never died; and he eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and puts on clothes.’ ‘In the ditch above of the Malebranche,’ said he, ‘there where the tenacious pitch is boiling, Michel Zanche had not yet arrived, when this one left a devil in his stead, in his own body, and of one of his kindred who carried out the treachery with him. . . .’

“Ah, Genovese, men who have forsaken all morality, and full of corruption, why are ye not scattered from the earth? For with the worst spirit of Romagna, I found one of you, whose soul bathes even now in Cocytus for his evil deeds, while on earth he still appears to be alive.”)

Was ever such superb and eternal vengeance as that of the poet of the *Inferno*, which could thus ignore all the laws of time and space, and “survive the bounds of mortal fate”? No guilty soul can escape that stern judgment of the avenger, which stretches forth to the future and the past, and arraigns alike the living and the dead. Yet after reading the sentence on Branca d’Oria, we can scarcely wonder that, when this was

* *Inf.* xxxiii. 137.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

noised abroad, Dante should have been but ill received in Genoa—as we learn from a widespread tradition.

With regard to the dialect of this province, we read in the “*De Vulgari Eloquentia*” that: “The language of the Tuscans varies from that of the Genoese, and that of the Genoese from that of the Sardinians.” The distinguishing characteristic was the prevalence of *z*, whence its harshness. “Bear this in mind, that if the Genoese were through forgetfulness to lose the letter *z*, they would have either to be dumb altogether, or to discover some new kind of speech, for *z* forms the greatest part of their dialect, and this letter is not uttered without great harshness.”*

* Trans. by A. G. F. Howell.

CHAPTER XII
THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

“ L'alba vinceva l'ora mattutina
che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano
conobbi *il tremolar della marina.*”

Purg. i. 115.

(“The dawn conquered the morning breeze which
fled before it, so that from afar I recognised the
tremulous glimmer of the sea.”)

CHAPTER XII

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

IN the *Divina Commedia* we have many indications that Dante had some personal knowledge of the sea. Of its majestic grandeur in storm and tempestuous gales we do not gather that he had much experience ; he was no adventurous voyager on the mighty ocean, but from the internal evidence of his poem it is probable that he crossed the Mediterranean. To him this was pre-eminently "il mare" :

"La maggior valle in che l'acqua si spanda . . .
fuor di quel mar che la terra inghirlanda,
Tra i discordanti liti, contra il sole
tanto sen va che fa meridiano
là dove l'orizzonte pria far suole." *

("The greatest valley in which the water spreads, except that sea which engirdles the earth, between opposing shores, against the sun, going so far that it makes meridian of what was first horizon.")

He means that at Gibraltar the sun is on the horizon

* *Par.* ix. 82.

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when it is noon on the Levant ; that the sea extends over a quadrant.

In the Middle Ages men had a peculiar awe and dislike of the sea, and we can scarcely wonder at it when we see those marvellous pictures of ships in ancient manuscripts. The misery and discomfort of a voyage must have been unspeakable in those days ; and a short quotation from the Life of St. Louis, by the Sire de Joinville, will give some idea of the spirit in which it was undertaken. " It was the month of August in which we embarked from the rock of Marseilles, and the ports of the vessels were opened to allow the horses to enter. Then the port was caulked and stopped up as close as a large tun of wine, because when the vessel was at sea the port was under water.

" When the priests and clerks embarked, the captain made them mount to the castle of the ship, and chant psalms in praise of God, that He might be pleased to grant us a prosperous voyage. They all with a loud voice sang the beautiful hymn of ' Veni Creator ' from the beginning to the end ; and while they were singing the mariners set their sails in the name of God. Instantly after, a breeze of wind filled our sails, and soon made us lose sight of the land, so that we only saw sea and sky, and each day we were at a farther distance from the place from which we had set out.

" I must say here that he is a great fool who shall put himself in such danger, having wronged any one or having any mortal sins on his conscience ; for when he goes to sleep in the evening, he knows not if in the morning he may not find himself under the sea."

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

So strong was this dread of trusting oneself on the wide ocean, that most special attractions were held out to pilgrims who would dare to brave such peril. The dispenser of indulgences offered the supreme bait of long reprieve from Purgatory :

“ And thou that passest over the sea
Twelve thousand year is granted to thee ! ”

In the days of Dante, and for long afterwards, a sea voyage from Genoa to Marseilles was a favourite route to France, probably in a small coasting-vessel. The description of the vesper bell heard at sea would be quite in keeping with the suggestion that this was the way chosen by the poet :

“ Era già l'ora che volge il disio
ai naviganti, e intenerisce il core
lo dì ch' han detto ai dolci amici addio ;
E che lo nuovo peregrin d'amore
punge, se ode squilla di lontano,
che paia il giorno pianger che si more.”*

(“ Now was the hour that awakens the desire of those who sail the sea, and melts their heart on the day when they have said farewell to their sweet friends ; and that pierces the newly made pilgrim with love, if from afar he hears the chimes which seem to mourn the dying day.”)

Then we have many little touches, in which Dante

* *Purg.* viii. 1.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

loves to show how familiar he is with seafaring matters.
We have the ship setting forth from the harbour,
passing the light skiffs moored to the shore :

"Come tal volta stanno a riva i burchi,
che parte sono in acqua e parte in terra." *

The reluctance to start on the sea voyage :

"Noi eravam lunghezzo il mare ancora,
come gente che pensa suo cammino,
che va col core, e col corpe dimora." †

("We are still beside the ocean, like those who
think of the journey and set forth in spirit while
the body remains behind.")

We have the diver plunging after the anchor :

"Sì come torno colui che va giuso
talora a solver ancora, ch' agrappa
o scoglio od altro che nel mare è chiuso,
Che in su sis tende, e da piè si rattappa." ‡

("Even as he returns, who has been down to
loose the anchor grappled fast against some rock or
other thing hidden in the sea, who, spreading out
his arms, draws in his feet.")

All going well, with the ship sailing fast before the
wind, and the water closing in again behind :

* *Inf.* xvii. 19.

† *Purg.* ii. 10.

‡ *Inf.* xvi. 133.

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

“Andavam forte,
sì come nave pinta da buon vento.” *

(“We went bravely on like unto a ship driven by
a fair wind.”)

“O voi che siete in piccioletta barca . . .
tornate a riveder li vostro liti :
non vi mettote in pelago. . . .
Metter potete ben per l’alto sale
vostro navigio, servando mio solco
dinanzi all’ acqua che ritorno equale.” †

(“O ye who in your little bark turn to revisit
your own shores ; commit not yourselves to the
open sea . . . but *ye others* . . . may indeed
commit your vessel fearlessly to the deep brine,
marking well the broad furrow before you in the
wave, on the water which returns to its level.”)

We are carried back to the days of many rowers,
most familiar in old illustrations of seafaring life, by
the following :

“Sì come, per cessar fatica o rischio,
li remi, pria nell’ acqua ripercossi,
tutti si posan al sonar d’un fischio.” ‡

(“As when, on account of weariness or approach-
ing peril, the oars which until now were striking the
water, all pause at the sound of the whistle.”)

* *Purg.* xxiv. 2.

† *Par.* ii. 1.

‡ *Par.* xxv. 133.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

When Dante wishes to describe the tortured souls in hell, who partly rise out of the boiling pitch, there occurs to him the far-off memory of dolphins at sea, thus :

"Come i delfini, quando fanno segno
ai marinar con l'arco della schiena,
che s'argomentin di campar lor legno." *

("As dolphins raised their arched backs as a sign to mariners that they may make ready to save their ship.")

This alludes to a popular tradition that when dolphins thus disport themselves, a storm is at hand. The belief is also mentioned in the "Trésor" of Brunetto Latini. When the threatened gale has arisen, then we learn that :

"Quali dal vento le gonfiate vele
caggiono avvolte, poichè l'alber fiacca." †

("The sails, puffed out by the wind, fall entangled when the mast breaks.")

Thus it was that Plutus, the ancient god of riches, fell to the ground at the sharp reproof of Virgil.

The sudden tempest passes away, and they draw near to the haven where they would be, whither the pilot directs his course by the stars.

"Come il più basso face
qual timon gira per venire a porto." ‡

* *Inf.* xxii. 19.

† *Inf.* vii. 13.

‡ *Purg.* xxx. 5.

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

(" Even as that lower wain [Septentrion] guides
him who turns the helm into port.")

This word "Septentrion" is understood to mean the seven-fold group of stars in the constellation of the Great Bear.

We find the most sustained effort with regard to the sea, in the story told by Ulysses, who is somewhat harshly treated by the poet, being found in the Inferno amongst the evil counsellors and the crafty :

" Ma misi me per l'alto mare aperto
sol con un legno e con quella compagna
picciola, dalla qual non fui deserto.
L'un lito e l'altro vidi infin la Spagna,
fin nel Morrocco, e l'isola de' Sardi,
e l'altre che quel mare intorno bagna.
Io e i compagni eravam vecchi e tardi,
quando venimmo a quella foce stretta,
ov' Ercole segnò li suoi riguardi,
Acciocchè l'uom più oltre non si metta ;
dalla man destra mi lasciai Sibilia,
dall'altra già m'avea lasciata Setta, . . .
E, volta nostra poppa nel mattino,
de' remi facemmo ale al folle volo,
sempre acquistando dal lato mancino.
Tutte le stelle già dell' altro polo
vedea la notte, e il nostro tanto basso,
che non surgeva fuor del marin suolo. . . .
Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto :
chè della nuova terra un turbo nacque,
e percosse del legno il primo canto.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

Tre volte il fe' girar con tutte l'acque,
alla quarta levar la poppa in suso,
e la prora ire in giù, com' altrui piacque,
Infin che il mar fu sopra noi richiuso." *

("I put forth on the deep open sea, with but one ship, and with that small company which had not deserted me. I saw both the shores, as far as Spain, as far as Morocco; and I saw Sardinia and the other isles which the sea washes around. I and my companions were old and slow when we came to that narrow pass, where Hercules set his landmarks which no man might pass beyond; on the right hand I left Seville, and on the other had almost left Ceuta. . . . Turning the poop towards the dawn, we made wings of our oars for the foolish flight, ever gaining on the left. All the stars of the other pole Night already saw; and ours so low that it rose not from the ocean floor. [This means that the equator was crossed.] We rejoiced and soon our joy was turned to grief, for a tempest rose from the new land and struck the forepart of our ship. Three times it made her whirl round with all the waves; the fourth time it lifted up the poop and sank the prow, as pleased Another, till the sea closed in above us.")

This voyage of Ulysses is pure Dantesque! As for the columns of Hercules, Gibraltar (Mount Calpe), and Mount Abyla in North Africa, they were looked upon in those days as the limit of the habitable world.

Where better than at sea can Dante have had occasion to note the changing aspect of the heavens?

* *Inf.* xxvi. 100.

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

With a mind at leisure from the anxiety of the wayfarer by land, with no need to cast down his eyes upon the footpath before him, the open sky with its endless pageantry of clouds, the radiance of noon-tide, the glories of sunrise and sunset were to him a source of unfailing joy. Where can we find anything more beautiful than the marvellous description of coming dawn in the opening chapter of the *Purgatorio*?

"Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,
che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
dell' aer puro infino al primo giro,
Agli occhi miei ricominciò diletto. . . .
Lo bel pianeta che ad amar conforta
faceva tutto rider l'oriente,
velando i Pesci ch' erano in sua scorta. . . .
Goder pareva il ciel di lor fiammelle. . . ." *

("Sweet hue of orient sapphire which was spread over the serene face of the pure sky, high up to the first circle, restored delight to mine eyes. The radiant planet which invites to love made all the Orient laugh for joy, veiling the Fishes which were in her train. The very heavens seemed to rejoice in their flames. . . .")

"L'alba vinceva l'ora mattutina
che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano
conobbi il tremolar della marina." †

("The dawn conquered the morning breeze which fled before her, so that from afar I recognised the tremulous glimmer of the sea.")

* *Purg.* i. 13.

† *Purg.* i. 117.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

It is most interesting to notice the poet's intense passion for light. It has been well said that "Light is his special and chosen source of poetic beauty. Light never fails him . . . simple, unalloyed, unshadowed, eternal, lifts the creatures of his thought above all affinity to time and matter."

"Amor che il ciel governi,
tu il sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti. . . .
Parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
dalla fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
lago non fece mai tanto disteso." *

("O love who governest the heaven, thou knowest,
who with thy light didst raise me up. . . . So
much of heaven then seemed to me enkindled with
the sun's flame, that neither rain nor river ever
made a lake so wide.")

"Io veggio ben sì come *tu l' annidi*
nel proprio lume, e che dagli occhi il traggi,
perch' ei corruscan, sì come tu ridi. . . .
Questo diss'io diritto alla lumiera
che pria m'avea parlato, ond'ella fessi
lucente più assai di quel ch'ell'era.
Sì come il sol, che si cela egli stessi
per troppa luce, come il caldo ha rose
le temperanze dei vapori spessi. . . ." †

("I see full well how thou hast *made to thyself a*
nest in thine own light, and dost draw it from
thine eyes, because they sparkle as thou smilest.

* *Par. i. 74.*

† *Par. v. 124.*

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

. . . This, I said, turned towards the light which first had spoken to me; whereupon it glowed far brighter than before. Like as the sun which hideth himself by excess of light when the heat hath scattered the dense vapours which veiled him. . . .")

The whole of this canto is one chant of joy and light, clear, diffused, insupportable brightness, making the whole world radiant, and veiling the sun in his own light. What a marvellous simile, "tu t'annidi."

As Ruskin observes: "His pieces of pure pale light are always exquisite; that white clearness, 'bianca aspetto di cilestro,'* which is so characteristic of fine days in Italy." He points out that great as is Dante's intense love of light, "he has an equally intense detestation of all mist, rack of cloud or dimness of rain. . . . In fact he has assigned to the souls of the gluttonous in the Inferno no other punishment than perpetuity of Highland weather."

"Showers

Ceaseless, accursed, heavy and cold, unchanged
For ever, both in kind and in degree,
Large hail, discoloured water, sleety flaw,
Through the dim midnight air streamed down amain."

Yet although our poet loved not mist and rain, he could describe them with a master hand, as when Buonconte tells the touching story of his end amid the rushing waters of the Archiano.

"Ben sai come nell' aere si raccoglie
quell' umido vapor, che in acqua riede
tosto che sale dove il freddo il coglie. . . .

* *Purg.* xxvi. 6.

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Indi la valle, come il dì fu spento,
da Pratomagno al gran giogo coperse
di nebbia, e il ciel di sopra *fece intento*. . . .” *

(“Thou knowest how the damp vapour gathers in the air, and turns to water as soon as it ascends, where the cold condenses it. . . . Then when the day was spent, he covered the valley from Pratomagno to the great mountain chain with mist, and the heaven above *made a tent*. . . .”)

In these last words, the thoughts of Dante must have turned to the Psalm: “In them hath he set a *tabernacle* for the sun,” in short, a curtained tent with its veil and hangings.

If the radiance of day had the strongest charm for the poet, he had yet a tender feeling for the close of day with its regrets and yearnings, its soft melancholy; the mysterious sounds and uncertain lights glimmering across the water, the far-off vesper bell, and “the chants of Compline, the Salve Regina and the Te Lucis ante terminum.”

“Già eran sopra noi tanto levati
gli ultima raggi che la notte segue,
che le stelle apparivan da più lati.” †

(“Now were the last rays, followed close by night, risen so far above us that the stars were appearing above us on many sides.”)

“Vapori accesi non vid'io sì tosto
di prima notte mai fender sereno,
nè, sol calando, nuvole d' agosto.” ‡

* *Purg.* v. 109.

† *Purg.* xvii. 70.

‡ *Purg.* v. 37.

THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA

("Never did I see flaming vapours cleave the bright sky so swiftly at fall of night, or August clouds at sunset." [The sheet lightning of summer.]

"'Lo sol sen va,' soggiunse, 'e vien la sera. . . .'
E pria che in tutta le sue parte immense
fosse orrizzonte fatto d'un aspetto,
e notte avesse tutte le sue dispense. . . .'"*

("'The sun is sinking,' it added, 'and the evening cometh. . . .' And ere the horizon in all its mighty range had become one hue, night held all her dominion. . . .")

"Quale par li seren tranquilli e puri
discorre ad ora ad or subito foco,
movendo gli occhi che stavan sicuri,
E pare stella che tramuti loco,
se non che dalla parte ond' ei s'accende
nulla sen perde, ed esso dura poco."†

("As through the tranquil and pure skies, there shoots from time to time a sudden flame, startling the eyes which before were steady, and seems to be a star that changeth place, save that where it was seen to flash, not one is lost, and itself endures but a little time.")

With this exquisite description of a shooting star seen at night in a clear heaven, we will close the chapter of Dante's musings on sea and sky.

* *Purg.* xxvii. 61, 70.

† *Par.* xv. 13.



CHAPTER XIII
MEDIÆVAL PARIS,
IN LEGEND AND STORY

“I pity all the unfortunate, but above all those who, afflicted by exile, only see their native land in dreams.”

“De Vulgari Eloquentia,” II. vi. 36–39.

CHAPTER XIII

MEDIÆVAL PARIS, IN LEGEND AND STORY

ACCEPTING the testimony of Villani, Boccaccio and other historians, that Dante went to the famous University of Paris, we will endeavour to trace out some indications of his journey thither. After coasting along the shores of the Mediterranean from Genoa, we take as his landing-place the port of Marseilles, to which he makes several slight references in the *Divina Commedia*. The troubadour Folco, afterwards a Cistercian monk, remarks that it was his birthplace.

“Di quella valle fu’ io littorano
tra Ebro e Macra, che, per cammin corto,
lo Genovese parte dal Toscano.
Ad un occaso quasi e ad un orto
Buggea siede e la terra ond’ io fui,
che fe’ del sangue suo già caldo il porto.” *

(“I was born on the shore of that valley, midway between the Ebro and the Macra, which in its short course divides the Genoese and the Tuscan. Almost

* *Par.* ix. 88.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

alike for sunrise and sunset, lies Bougiah and the place I spring from, which with its own blood once warmed the harbour.")

This last line refers to the slaughter described by Lucan (iii. 572) when Brutus besieged "Marsilia." The two rivers mentioned are the Ebro in Spain and the Macra in the Lunigiana, and Marseilles is described as being half-way between them, and on the same meridian as Bougiah, a city in Algeria. This position of the port is the first thing to strike one who looks at a mediæval map, so sparing of names.

The next reference to the place is one of those classical allusions in which the poet delights.

"Cesare, per soggiogare Ilerda,
punse Marsilia e poi corse in Ispagna." *

("Cæsar, to subdue Ilerda, stabbed Marseilles and then raced to Spain.")

The story of a whole campaign was never tersely compressed into much smaller space. Cæsar appears to have left Brutus to carry on the siege of Marseilles, while to save time he rushed off to Ilerda, now Lerida, in Catalonia, and there defeated the lieutenants of Pompey, Afranius and Petreius. After this exploit Lucan may well speak of him as a thunderbolt.

Leaving Marseilles, on his way north, Dante would pass through the great Campus Lepideus, the broad shingly bed of the Rhone, on his way to Arles, that once-famous city, the chosen abode of Constantine, and even named the Gallic Rome. Here we may still

* *Purg.* xviii. 101.

MEDIÆVAL PARIS

behold that most noted and favourite burying-ground, the Aliscamps (Elysios Campos), which had been used in Roman times but was consecrated by St. Trophimus for a Christian resting-place, with special protection from the "demons of the sepulchre." It was therefore in much request for those who died in arms against the infidels, and tradition says that most of the paladins of Charlemagne, slain at Roncevalles, were brought hither. Benvenuto also gravely tells us that after the great battle of Arles, when William of Orange was defeated by the Saracens, tombs were miraculously provided for the slaughtered Christians, each one of whom was distinguished by a mystic writing on his forehead; "thus providing that they should be buried in large or small tombs according to their rank," naïvely adds the chronicler.

Arles is compared to the city of Dis, which when Dante entered :

"Com'io fui dentro, l'occhio intorno invio ;
e veggio ad ogni man grande campagna
piena di duolo e di tormento rio.
Sì come ad Arli, ove il Rodano stagna. . . .
Fanno i sepolcri tutto il loco varo :
così facevan quivi d'ogni parte,
salvo che il modo v'era più amaro. . . ." *

("As soon as I was within, I looked around, and saw on either hand a spacious plain full of sorrow and of evil torment. As at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates . . . the sepulchres make all the place

* *Inf.* ix. 109.

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uneven; so did they here on every side, save that the manner here was more bitter. . . .")

From Arles the way to Paris would lead Dante through Avignon, then the Papal seat of Clement V., that evil Gascon, elected Pope in 1305, who then started the seventy years of the "Babylonian Captivity," holding his court at Avignon, and never even entering Italy. It is suggested that the poet's fierce denunciations of this intriguing and avaricious pontiff owe much of their bitterness to personal knowledge of his godless life and dissolute surroundings. As Clement was still living at the ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*, Dante resorts to his usual device, and reserves a place for him in the fearful Maleboge of the Inferno, where the Simoniacs are thrust head-foremost into tortures unspeakable.

"Chè dopo lui verrà, di più laid' opra,
di ver ponente un pastor senza legge. . . .
Nuovo Jason sarà, di cui si legge
ne' 'Maccabei,' e come a quel fu molle
suo re, così fia a lui chi Francia regge." *

("For after him from the West, there shall come a lawless Shepherd, of more evil deeds. . . . A new Jason will he be, of whom we read in Maccabees; and as to that high-priest his king yielded, so shall he who governs France to this one.") †

* *Inf.* xix. 82.

† Jason laboured underhand to be high-priest by bribing King Antiochus.—*Macc.* iv. 7.



M. Michel, Hotel du Forum, Arles

TOMBS AT ARLES

Figure 1

MEDIÆVAL PARIS

“E se non fosse che ancor lo mi vieta
la riverenza delle somme chiavi,
che tu tenesti nella vita lieta,
l'userai parole ancor più gravi:
che la vostra avarizia il monde attrista,
calcando i buoni e sollevando i pravi. . . .”*

(“And if I were not hindered by reverence for the Great Keys which thou heldest in the glad life [on earth], I would use still stronger words: for thine avarice grieves the world, trampling on the good and raising up the wicked. . . .”)

After various other passages of this kind comes the solemn sentence, pronounced as her last words by the celestial Beatrice, after that splendid passage where the great throne is pointed out which awaits Henry the beloved Emperor.

“E fia prefetto nel foro divino
allora tal, che palese e coperto
non anderà con lui per un cammino.
Ma poco poi sarà da Dio sofferto
nel santo officio: ch'ei sarà detruso
là dove Simon mago è per suo merto
E farà quel d'Anagna esser più giuso.”†

(“He who presideth in the Court of things divine, shall be one with whom open and secret go not the same way. But God will endure him in the sacred office but a little time; for he shall be thrust

* *Inf.* xix. 100.

† *Par.* xxx. 142.

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down where Simon Magus is for his penalty, and he shall force down him of Anagna one step lower.")

Boniface VIII. (of the Anagna tragedy) is awaiting him below in the pit.

It has been suggested that one object of Dante's journey to Paris was to increase his knowledge of dogmatic theology and astronomic science before completing his great work. In these subjects the University of Paris was then distinguished above all others. Founded by Philip Augustus, it was an association of school guilds, and the curriculum of learning was called the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, and embraced the seven liberal sciences, as stated in this popular distich :

"Gramm[atica] loquitur ; Dia[lectica] vera docet ; Rhet[orica]
verba colorat ;
Mus[ica] canit ; Aa[ithmetica] numerat ; Geo[metria] pon-
derat ; As[tronomia] colit astra."

Its headquarters were on the south bank of the Seine, at the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, which is still the centre of the *Quartier Latin*. The famous Sorbonne had been founded in 1202 by the king's confessor, Robert de Sorbonne, so called from his native village. This became an exclusively theological college in connection with the university.

One commentator pictures to himself Dante "sitting at the feet of some professor of natural science, as he unfolded, with astrolabe and globes before him, the latest discoveries of Roger Bacon and his friend Pierre de Maricourt on the dark spots on the moon's surface, and the errors that were creeping into the calendar through men's ignorance of astronomy. . . ." He also

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"considers the astronomical knowledge of the *Paradiso* to be of a higher, more speculative, character than that of the *Inferno*."*

We certainly have a most delightful conversation between Dante and Beatrice in the second canto, on the vexed subject of the moon's spots, wherein his divine lady gives him such an exhaustive lecture that we might well mistake her for some "sweet girl graduate" of Girton! Dante begins:

"Ma ditemi, che son li segni bui
di questo corpo, che laggiuso in terra
fan di Cain favoleggiare altrui?"
Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi: "S'egli erra
l'opinion, mi disse, dei mortali,
dove chiave di senso non disserra. . . ."†

("But tell me, what are those dark spots upon this body, which down below make people believe the tale of Cain?"† She smiled a little and then said: "If so, the opinion of mortals is in error, where the key of sense fails to unlock. . . .")

and so on to the end of the canto, with a curious reflection of Roger Bacon's theory.

There are various legends about Dante in connection with Paris. Jean Serraville, Bishop of Fermo, 1416, says that the poet was a *bachelier* in the University, where he read all the sentences for the degree of

* Dean Plumptre.

† *Par.* ii. 49.

† Benvenuto explains: The common folk tell the tale how Cain may be seen in the moon, going with a bundle of thorns to sacrifice.

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Master, he also read the Bible ; he replied to all the questions according to custom, and went through all the necessary forms for obtaining the degree of Doctor in Theology. There only remained the *inceptio* or the *conventus*. But he had no money to pay the fees.

In "Les Proscrits" Balzac tells us where the poet had his lodging. In 1309 there were but a few houses on the "Terrain," often inundated, formed by the sand and alluvium of the Seine, above the Cité, under the cold shadow of Notre Dame. Here the old sacristan had a low dwelling with a pointed roof ; a round opening lighted the attic which looked out on the river. The house was set in the midst of a little garden, twenty-five perches in all, with a plot of green cabbages and onions, a rude hedge of rose-trees, encircled by wind-beaten willows, rushes and tall weeds. In this enclosure, for which he paid forty sous parisis a year, the old man kept a few fowls and sold the eggs to the canons of Notre Dame. Here, in the romance, Dante was supposed to find a congenial abode.

Then we are told about the schools in the "Rue du Fouarre," which is mentioned in the *Paradiso*.

"Essa è la luce eterna di Sigieri,
che, leggendo nel vico degli strami,
sillogizzò invidiosi veri." *

("There is the light eternal of Sigier, who, lecturing in the Rue du Fouarre, did syllogise truths which made him hated.")

* *Par.* x. 136.

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Here the students of all nations met to hear the lectures, with bundles of fresh straw on the cold stone floor to take the place of benches. With one knee for his tablets, the scholar was ready to write down the improvisation of the lecturer, in such haste that his work was full of the abbreviations which are the despair of modern decipherers. Amongst the audience were to be found not only the real students but distinguished clergy, courtiers, learned strangers, men of the sword, rich bourgeois—in short, there was quite a passion for theology and grammar ; it was the fashionable thing to go and hear lectures !

We can see the company of students hurrying out from the great barn-like building, their long gowns flapping with the sound of a flight of birds, while they talk loud and fast, bandying chaff in rough and ready Latin. Some of that light-hearted crew will quickly make their way to the tavern hard by, where a creaking sign and a bush, to proclaim good wine, hang alluringly over the doorway. Within there is ever a sound of laughter and voices, a clatter of metal pots ; men sit about on low benches, their elbows on the table, with straggling flasks of wine before them, while their feet are grinding and shuffling in the dirty straw.

But we will not follow the frivolous lads to that familiar inn of old Paris, for we may rest assured that Dante was not of their number. There only remains to give that wonderful description of the poet's outward aspect—a word-picture painted by a master hand—so vivid and sympathetic, that we can see the central figure of the Middle Ages live and breathe before us.

“Le visage maigre et sec portait les traces de

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passions malheureuses et de grands évènements accomplis. Les yeux profondément enfoncés sous les grands arceaux dessinés par ses sourcils . . . les paupières larges et bordées d'un cercle noir vivement marqué sur le haut de sa joue. Cet œil magique et perçant saisissait l'âme par un regard pesant et plein de pensées—un regard de plomb et de feu, fixe et noble, sévère et calme."

"Le nez tombait droit et se prolongeait de telle sorte que les narines semblaient le retenir. Les os de la face étaient nettement accusés par des rides droites et longues qui creusaient les joues décharnées. Vous eussiez dit le lit d'un torrent où la violence des eaux écoulées était attestée par la profondeur des sillons, qui trahissaient quelque lutte horrible, éternelle. Semblable à la trace laissée par les rames d'une barque sur les ondes, de larges plis partant de chaque côté de son nez accentuaient fortement son visage, et donnaient à sa bouche, ferme et sans sinuosités, un caractère d'amère tristesse.

"Au-dessus de l'ouragan peint sur ce visage, son front tranquille s'élançait avec une sorte de hardiesse et le couronnait comme d'une coupole en marbre.

"L'étranger gardait cette attitude intrépide et sérieuse que contractent les hommes accoutumés au malheur. . . . Son geste possédait une irrésistible puissance ; ses mains décharnées étaient celles d'un guerrier. Il marchait entouré d'une majesté silencieuse qui le faisait prendre pour un despote sans gardes, pour quelque dieu sans rayons. . . .

"Il portait une espèce de surplis en drap noir, sans manches, qui s'agrafait par devant et descendait jusqu'à mi-jambe, en lui laissant le col nu, sans rabat. Il avait

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sur la tête une calotte en velours, semblable à celui d'un prêtre, et qui traçait une ligne circulaire au-dessus de son front sans qu'un seul cheveu s'en échappât. C'était le deuil le plus rigide et l'habit le plus sombre qu'un homme pût prendre. Sans une longue épée qui pendait à son côté, soutenue par une ceinture de cuir que l'on apercevait à la fente du surtout noir, un ecclésiastique l'eût salué comme un frère.

"Quoiqu'il fût de taille moyenne, il paraissait grand ; mais en le regardant au visage, il était gigantesque." *

Such is our vision of Dante, the exile and the wayfarer.

In the *Divina Commedia* we find several allusions to Philip IV. the Fair, King of France at this time. In the *Antipurgatorio*, amongst the negligent rulers, Philip III. and Henry of Navarre are making lament over his wickedness.

"Padre e succero son del mal di Francia :
sanno la vita sua viziata e lorda,
e quindi viene il duol che sì li lancia." †

("Father and father-in-law are they of the scourge of France ; they know his evil and foul life, and hence comes the grief that pierceth them so.")

The poet alludes to the cruelty with which the king had hunted to death the great Order of the Knights-Templars in order to grasp their hoarded treasure.

"Veggio il nuovo Pilato si crudele,

* Balzac, "Les Proscrits."

† *Purg.* vii. 109.

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che ciò nol sazia, ma, senza decreto,
porto nel tempio le cupide vele." *

("I see the new Pilate so cruel, that not satisfied with this,† without sanction of law, he sets his covetous sails towards the Temple.")

Philip had also committed the unpardonable sin of tampering with the coinage, debasing it to pay for his campaign in Flanders.

"Là si vedrà il duol che sopra Senna
induce, falseggiando la moneta,
quei che morrà di colpo di cotenna." ‡

("There shall be seen the woe which he § is bringing upon the Seine by making false the coin, he who shall die by the wild boar's stroke.")

So fierce is Dante's hatred of this evil ruler that he ends with the cry : "O my Lord, when shall I rejoice to see the vengeance !"

We turn away with regret from the fascinating story of old Paris and the shadowy legend which connects it with Dante, and are suddenly brought face to face with the stern realities of history, and the great event which marked a crisis in the life of the exile and awakened his most ardent hopes. News reached him that the new Emperor, Henry VII. of Luxemburg, was about to set forth for Italy to receive the Imperial crown.

* *Purg.* xx. 91.

† The captivity and subsequent death of Pope Boniface.

‡ *Par.* xix. 118.

§ Philip.

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To understand thoroughly the interest aroused by this announcement would require a full knowledge both of the political position of Europe at that moment and of the passionate desire of Dante, the ardent doctrinaire, for that united monarchy which would bring peace and salvation to his distracted country, and restore the divine order of the world. Boccaccio states that the "*De Monarchia*" was written about this time, explaining his political views with academic calm in stately Latin prose.

This at least we know, that when the hour and the man at last appeared to have come, Dante lost no time in hastening to welcome him. We find no trace of this homeward journey, which cannot have been that of the peaceful wayfarer, at leisure to record his thoughts and impressions, but rather the hurried march of a soldier, rallying to the banner of his lord.

There seems no doubt that he was in Italy about the month of September 1310, when he wrote that burning enthusiastic letter, "*Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile*" (Epistle V.), addressed to the princes and peoples of Italy. He prays that they may have peace in this new day of unlooked-for joy, those who have kept vigil through the long night in the desert . . . for all who hunger and thirst shall be satisfied in the light of his (the Emperor's) rays, and they who love iniquity shall be confounded before his shining face. . . . "O Italy! henceforth rejoice; because thy bridegroom, the solace of the world and the glory of thy people, the most clement Henry, Divus, and Augustus and Cæsar, is hastening to the bridal. . . . Awake then all ye dwellers in Italy, and

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arise before your king ; since ye are destined not only to obey his command, but, as free-born children, to follow his guidance. . . ." *

The whole letter is written at red heat, and overflows with passionate devotion. The Emperor seems to have been a man after the poet's own heart, who took a lofty view of his mission. We are told that when he beheld the plains of Italy, he knelt down and gave thanks to God that his great work was at hand. When he rode into the streets of Milan on December 26, 1311, he solemnly declared that he came to make peace between the Guelfs and Ghibellines and to restore all the exiles, belonging to no party himself. In Dante's expectations there may have been a personal note, for the Emperor had expressed a desire to "show goodwill to all Florentines without respect of parties, and to make their city our treasure and archive house, the noblest of our empire." *

Did not the exiled Florentine picture to himself the fair city which he loved as the seat of empire, and himself recognised as the true patriot, raised to high honour by the side of his chosen leader ? Alas, for the vanity of human hopes, and the dream which was to have so bitter an awakening !

At first, all promised well. The cities of Lombardy opened their gates, the Emperor was received "as an angel of God" at Asti and Susa, and at Milan he was crowned in the church of San Ambrogio with the iron crown, on January 6, 1311, in the presence of Dante. Within that ancient church we can still see, unchanged through the centuries, the splendid Byzantine

* Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

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mosaics of the vaulting, the altar, unique in its marvellous facing of beaten gold with emblems of Apostles and Evangelists, and the primitive marble throne in the choir, which doubtless served for the coronation.

The city of Milan granted a liberal subsidy; ambassadors came from most of the Ghibelline cities of Italy and did homage to him, but the Guelf League held aloof, with Florence at its head. Three precious months were wasted in Milan by internal troubles, but in April the Emperor advanced against Cremona, which surrendered to him, through the negotiation of the Archbishop of Ravenna, and his people took Vicenza; then he laid siege to Brescia and took it at length, "after great loss and hurt, seeing that not one fourth part of his people were left to him, and of these a great part were sick. . . ."*

The tide of fortune had turned, and many troubles awaited him; but from these we must turn aside for awhile, and follow the footsteps of Dante in so far as any record is available.

* Villani.

100

101

CHAPTER XIV
IN THE CASENTINO

“ When thou, successor of Cæsar and of Augustus, leaping over the ridges of the Apennines, didst bring back the venerated Tarpeian standards, forthwith our long sighing came to an end, and the floods of our tears were dried. And with the rising of the longed-for Titan, the new hope of a better age flashed upon Latium.”

Epistola vii.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE CASENTINO

WHEN Dante with his own eyes had beheld the iron crown of Lombardy placed upon the brow of his "divine Arrigo," we should have expected him to remain in close companionship with the beloved Emperor, the hope of Italy; and it must have been some very strong motive which withdrew him from the Court at Milan. We can only surmise that the poet, who was now forty-six years of age, and had outlived any youthful attraction for a soldier's life, may have known himself to be unfitted for the life of a camp in the coming campaigns, and may have felt that he could serve his master better by diplomacy.

We have certain information that he was in the Casentino two months after the coronation at Milan, from the date of his terrible letter to the Florentines, March 31, 1311, and he was probably at that time the guest of Guido Novello of Battifolle, at the castle of Poppi.

The Conti Guidi were a very powerful family, of ancient lineage, owning great estates in the valley of the Arno, and, for the most part, loyal adherents of the Empire. But their allegiance was by no means secure, and at this critical time every effort was needed to

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strengthen the cause. The Empress Margaret is known to have written to the Countess Gherardesca of Battifolle, apparently to win her husband's support for the Emperor, and it has been suggested that Dante was employed as the bearer of the letter, that he might use his influence amongst the Ghibelline nobles of the Casentino. Some writers even maintain that the poet was for a time secretary to the Countess, and that his style can be traced in the courtly answers which the wife of Count Guido sent to the imperial lady, one of which, dated Poppi, May 16, 1311, is amongst the letters still extant.

However this may be, there is no doubt that during the eventful spring of 1311 the pen of the illustrious exile was indeed that of a ready writer, whose fervent epistles were no winged messengers of peace, but rather the scathing thunderbolts of an avenging prophet.

In the first glow of his enthusiasm, Dante had fondly hoped that Guelfs and Ghibellines alike would flock to the banner of his God-sent Emperor, but when he realised that his own city of Florence, at the head of the Guelphic league, was in the forefront of the resistance against their rightful lord, his grief and indignation could no longer be restrained. Then it was that he wrote that letter which perhaps has no parallel in history for its concentrated wrath.

"Dantes Allagherius Florentinus et exul immeritus, scelestissimis Florentinis intrinsecus." Such is the defiant heading, and it continues in the same strain. "You who transgress all laws, human and divine, you who are dragged by insatiable cupidity into all crime, quake you not to hear of the second death? For ye, first and alone, shunning the yoke of liberty, have

IN THE CASENTINO

murmured against the glory of the Roman prince, the king of the world and the minister of God . . . and have risen up in the insanity of rebellion!" They were trusting in the fortified walls they had newly built, but the Eagle, terrible in its field of gold, would fly upon them in his anger. "Hemmed in by a poor ditch, do you put faith in your contemptible defences? Oh, most wretched of men! . . . your city, worn out with long-drawn suffering, shall be given into the hands of the aliens, and the most of you scattered in death and captivity. . . . The divine and triumphant Henry is coming, seeking not his own good but that of the world at large. . . ." He dates his letter as :

"Written the day before the Kalends of April, on the confines of Tuscany, under the source of the Arno, in the first year of the most auspicious progress to Italy of Henry the Cæsar." (March 31, 1311.)*

These were brave words, but alas, for the eager hopes of Dante! The "auspicious campaign" made no progress, for Henry still delayed. The poet's impatience knew no bounds, and he took upon himself to rebuke the Lord's anointed, as no one else was bold enough to do so. Again he writes, in the spirit of another Samuel to Saul, his king :

"To the most holy triumphant one, and only Lord, Henry by divine Providence, King of the Romans, ever Augustus,—his most devoted servants Dante Alighieri the Florentine, an exile without cause, and all the Tuscans in one band who wish for peace on earth, send salutation by the kissing of feet."† Few bolder

* Epistola vi.

† Epistola vii.

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letters have ever been written to a ruling prince. He complains that "the envy of the ancient and implacable foe of man" is working against God's purpose. "We marvel what may be the cause of this so sluggish delay." Why lingers he, and why tarry the wheels of his chariot? It was time to say once more the words spoken to Cæsar: "Whilst the factions are trembling with no confirmed strength, banish delay! They who are ready ever suffer by deferring. . . ."

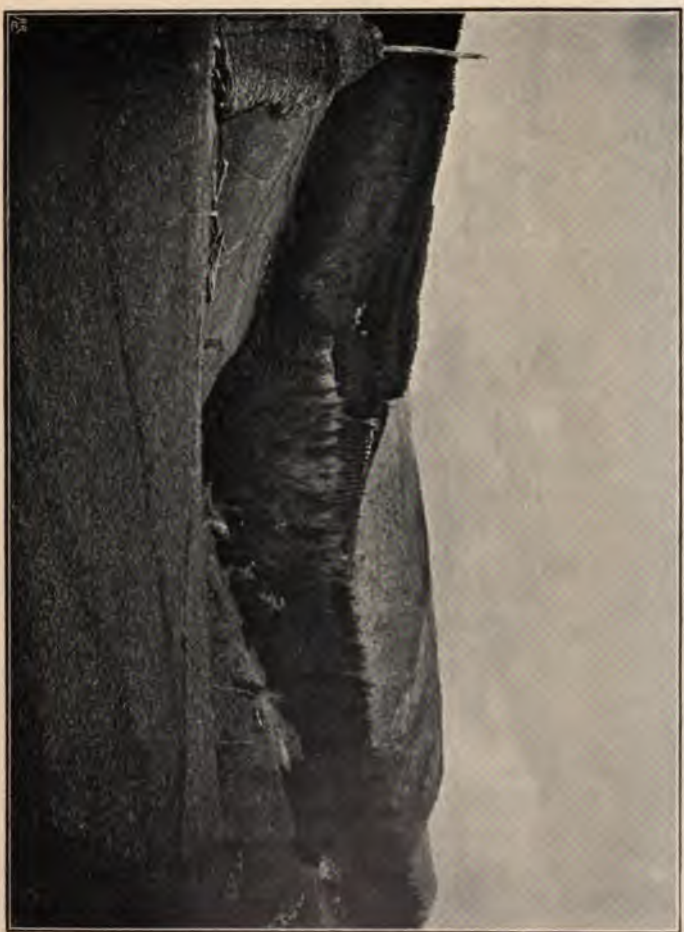
"Be ashamed then to be entangled in a little narrow plot . . . thou for whom the whole world looketh! . . . When thou was little in thine own eyes was thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And God anointed thee to be king over Israel, and God sent thee on the way and said: 'Go, slay the sinners of Amalek.' †

It was time to remind this lingering Æneas that he too had an Ascanius in his son, Prince John of Bohemia (who died at the battle of Crecy). "Dost thou delay at Milan through spring as well as winter? . . ." Florence was the fox's den, she who drank the polluted waters of the Arno; she was the viper . . . in short, no words were strong enough to describe her crimes! "Come, then, banish delay! thou lofty son of Jesse . . . Lay this Goliath low with the sling of thy wisdom, and the stone of thy strength. . . . Then shall our heritage . . . be restored to us again.

"Written in Tuscany, under the source of the Arno, fourteen days before the Kalends of May 1311, in the first year of the most auspicious progress to Italy of the divine Henry." †

The whole of the Casentino, including the slopes of

* Lucan, i. 28. † Epist. vii., trans. by P. H. Wicksteed



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CONSUMMA PASS

IN THE CASENTINO

the Etruscan Apennines as well as the upper valley of the Arno, is filled with memories of Dante, and he dwells so lovingly on the rivers and smiling meadows that he evidently had a special affection for this scene of his exile. In familiar lines he describes

"Li ruscelletti, che dei verdi colli
del Casentin discendon guiso in Arno,
facendo i lor canali freddi e molli,
Sempre mi stanno innanzi, e non indarno."*

("The little rivers that from the green hills of the Casentino flow down into the Arno, making their channels cool and moist, stand constantly before me, and not in vain.")

These lines must have been written in early spring, when the valley of the Arno is an exquisite symphony in every shade of green.

It is Maestro Adamo who speaks, the notorious coiner of Brescia, who, in the service of the Counts Guidi, counterfeited the gold florin of Florence, and paid the penalty of his crime, for the Florentines caused him to be burnt alive at the spot still called *La Consuma*, on the pass of that name beyond *Romena*. A heap of stones bears the name of the "*Maccia del Uomo Morto*," and each passer-by was wont to throw another stone upon it. Dante, as a citizen of the great commercial Republic, has no mercy upon a false coiner. He holds up to reprobation a certain king of *Servia* who had issued counterfeit Venetian coins, and, as we

* *Inf.* xxx. 64.

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have already seen, it was an added crime of Philip IV. to have debased the coin.

Maestro Adamo suffers tortures of thirst in the Inferno, and laments :

" Io ebbi vivo, assai di quel ch'io volli,
ed ora lasso ! un gocciol d'acqua bramo. . . .
Ivi è Romena, la dov' io falsai
la lega sigillata del Batista :
per ch'io il corpo suso arso lasciai." *

(" When alive I had all I wished for ; and now, alas ! I crave one little drop of water. . . . There is Romena where I falsified the alloy, stamped with the Baptist's image : for which on earth I left my body to be burnt.")

The most interesting description of this upper Val d'Arno is given in the pathetic story of Buonconte da Montefeltro, the famous Ghibelline captain who was slain at the battle of Campaldino. Dante meets him in the Antipurgatorio, and asks him :

" Qual forza o qual ventura
ti traviò sì fuor di Campaldino
che non si seppe mai tua sepoltura ? "
' Oh,' rispos' egli, ' a piè del Casentino
traversa un' acqua che ha nome l'Archiano,
che sopra l'Ermò nasce in Apennino.
Dove il vocabel suo diventa vano
arriva' io forato nella gola,
fuggendo a piede e sanguinando il piano.

* *Inf.* xxx., 62, 73.

IN THE CASENTINO

Quivi perdei la vista, e la parola
nel nome di Maria finii; e quivi
caddi, e rimasse la mia carne sola. . .
Indi la valle, come il dì fu spento,
da Pratomagno al gran giogo coperse
di nebbia, e il ciel di sopra fece intento
Sì che il pregno aere in acqua si converse;
la pioggia cadde, ed ai fossati venne
di lei ciò che la terra non sofferse;
E come a' rivi grandi si convenne,
ver lo fiume real tanto veloce
si ruinò, che nulla la ritenne.
Lo corpo mio gelato in su la foce
trovò l'Archian rubesto; e quel sospinse
nell' Arno, e sciolse al mio petto la croce,
Ch'io fei di me quando il dolor mi vinse;
voltommi per le ripe e per lo fondo,
poi di sua preda mi coperse e cinse." *

(“ ‘What force or accident bore thee so far from
Campaldino that thy grave was never found?’
‘Oh,’ he replied, ‘at the foot of Casentino a
stream crosses, which is named Archiano, and rises
in the Apennines above the Ermo. There where
its name is lost did I arrive, pierced in the throat,
flying on foot, and staining the plain with my
blood. There sight failed me, and my words
ended upon the name of Mary; and there I fell,
and my body alone remained. . . Then when day
was spent, he [the devil] covered the valley with
mist from Pratomagno to the great mountain
chain, and made the sky above into a lowering

* *Purg.* v. 91.

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tent, so that the saturated air was turned to water; the rain fell, and there came to the water-rills all that the land could not contain; and as it united into great torrents, so swiftly it rushed towards the royal stream, that nothing could hold it back. The raging Archiano found my frozen body at its mouth, and swept it into the Arno, and unfolded the cross on my breast that of myself I made, when overcome with pain; it hurled me along its banks and over its bed, then covered me enwrapt in its spoils.'")

I cannot do better than quote the sympathetic words of Ruskin upon these exquisite lines :

"Observe Buonconte, as he dies, crosses his arms over his breast, pressing them together, partly in his pain, partly in prayer. His body thus lies by the river shore, as on a sepulchral monument, the arms folded into a cross. The rage of the river, under the influence of the demon, *unlooses this cross*, dashing the body supinely away, and rolling it over and over by bank and bottom. Nothing can be truer to the action of a stream in fury than these lines. And how desolate is it all ! The lonely flight, the grisly wound, 'pierced in the throat'—the death without help or pity—only the name of Mary on the lips—and the cross folded over the heart. Then the rage of the demon and the river, the nameless grave, and at last, even she (his wife) who had been most trusted by him, 'Giovanna, nor none else, have care for me.'

"There is, I feel assured, nothing else like it in all the range of poetry."

Buonconte received his death-wound at the battle of Campaldino, which was fought on St. Barnabas' day,



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RIVER ARCHIANO

IN THE CASENTINO

July 11, 1289. Tradition tells us that Dante, then twenty-four years of age, fought here as a volunteer under Vieri de Cerchi, when the Florentines defeated the Aretines in that open plain between the mountains, green with sprouting corn. Dino Compagni relates that when the men of Florence and their allies arrived, they halted and set themselves in battle array. The captains of war placed the light-armed troops in the front rank, and those bearing on their shield the red lily on a white ground were arranged at the rear. When the bishop, who was short-sighted, asked, "What walls are those?" he received the answer, "The shields of the enemies."

Messer Barone de Mangiadori, a bold and experienced knight, having assembled the men-at-arms, spoke thus to them: "Sirs, the wars in Tuscany were wont to be won by attacking well, and they did not last long, nor were many men slain, since to slay was not the custom. Now the mode is changed, and victory comes by standing quite still. I therefore counsel you to stand firm and to leave the attack to them." This they prepared to do. When the battle began in earnest, "the air was filled with clouds and the dust was very great; there was much bloodshed, arrows rained on every side, and the battle was fierce and stubborn. . . .

"Victory remained with the Florentines, who took many flags and many prisoners, and many of these they slew, so that the defeat wrought great damage through Tuscany." *

Villani tells us a strange story with regard to this

* Villani.

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battle. The news of the said victory came to Florence the same day, at the same hour that it took place, for after their meal the priors being gone to sleep and repose, after the care and wakefulness of the past night, suddenly there was a knocking on the chamber door with the cry: "Arise, for the Aretines are discomfited"; and having risen and opened the door, they found no one, and their servant without had heard nothing, wherefore it was held to be a great and notable marvel, inasmuch as no person came from the host with tidings before the hour of vespers. "And this was the truth, for I heard and saw it," adds the old chronicler.

It is a weird tale, but many legends appear to cluster about this field of Campaldino. Palmieri, a writer of the early fifteenth century, gravely assures us that when the Florentines returned from pursuing the enemy on the third day, and proceeded to seek for their friends and bury the dead, Dante found a comrade who either "was not quite dead or else suddenly revived." He then began to describe what he had seen during those days of purgatory and hell, "words through which the plan of the *Divina Commedia* was revealed to Dante."

The Archiano rises in the Apennines above the Ermo, close to which stands the great monastery of Camaldoli, founded by St. Romuald, that fiery monk of the tenth century whose eventful life has been written by St. Peter Damian.

"Qui è Romoaldo,
qui son li frati miei, che dentro ai chiostri
fermar li piedi e tennero il cor saldo." *

* *Par.* xxii. 49.

IN THE CASENTINO

(St. Benedict says: "Here is Romaldus, and here are my brethren who stayed their feet within the cloister and kept a steadfast heart.")

The Archiano flows at first in a narrow bed closed in by crumbling brown rocks, while the slopes above are clothed with wind-swept oak-trees. After a while, side valleys open on either side, from one of which another stream, the Fosso of Camaldoli, sweeps down to unite with the Archiano on its way to the plain below. Here the classic river of Buonconte follows a winding course amid the shallows, twinkling with silver in the sunshine and blue-green in the flecked shadows, as it ripples dreamily on over its pebbly bed, betwixt the tangled weedy banks, where the delicate diaphanous young foliage of poplars and willows rustles lightly in the breeze.

Not far above, where it joins the Arno, rises the hill on which stands the ancient walled town of Bibbiena, from whence we can look southward towards those rocky crags and snow-capped heights of Pratomagno and Falterona, which Dante pictures to us. He only gives one line to La Verna, on the wooded slope of a mountain to the north of this part of the Val d'Arno, where a monastery was founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1218.

In the *Paradiso*, in the glowing heaven of the sun, Thomas Aquinas tells the story of this gentle saint in full detail, and relates how after he had preached in the proud presence of the Soldan, he returned to gather fruit in Italy, and received the stigmata "Nel crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno."* ("On

* *Par.* xi. 106.

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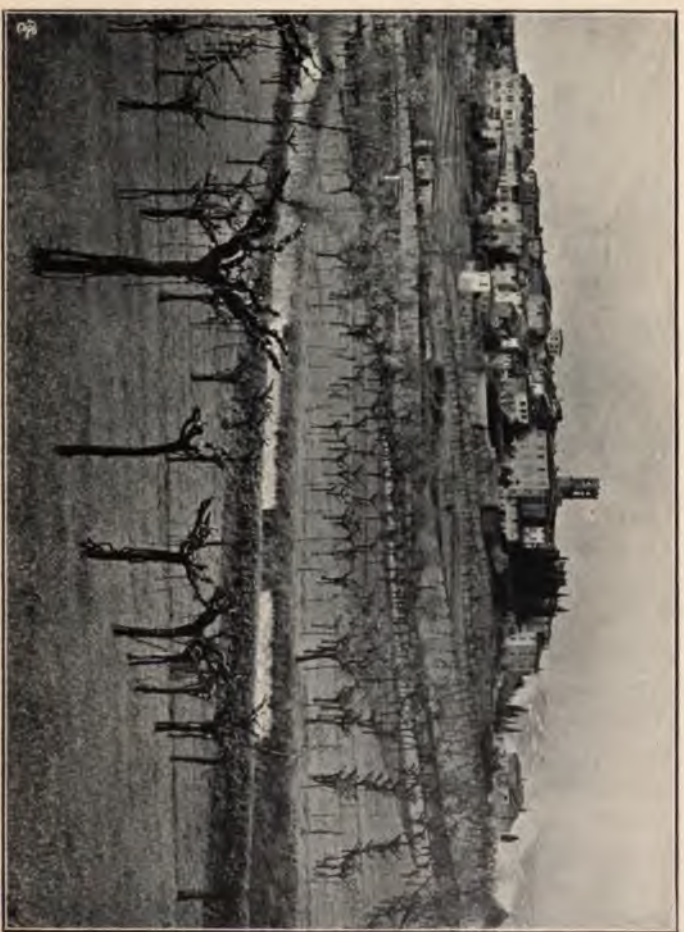
that rough rock between the Tiber and the Arno.")

Bibbiena is a friendly cheerful little town, and has a fine open market-place on the ridge, with a tall stone fountain where the women come to fill their copper water-pots. A busy place is this Piazza on market-days, when a long string of asses winds up the stony path to bring hither the pedlars' wares in sacks—vegetables and green fodder of all kinds for man and beast, broad straw hats for the maidens, rough pictures and little books of legend and devotion, stuffs of many hues, which are proudly proclaimed in song as "da Milano"; strings of black and white tape flaunted banner-wise on a long pole, and all other goods that the heart of *contadina* can desire!

It might be a fair of the Middle Ages, save that now there is no feudal lord in the massive castle keep hard by, to claim his dues with a high hand. As we turn away from Bibbiena and follow the steep descent to the valley between vineyards and copses, we see rise before us the other "verdi colli" of the Casentino, while near at hand, to the left, the Carthusian convent of the "Madonna del Sasso" lies enshrouded in trees.

Those little hill-towns of Italy, what a glamour they have for us! Whether they stand defiant on a rocky crag overlooking the sea, once the haunt of pirates—or with rugged fortress and battered walls, desperately perched on a volcanic ridge in the inhospitable Maremma—or lastly here, Bibbiena and Poppi, in this soft luxuriant landscape of the Val d'Arno, whose entrancing charm in the spring-tide no words can tell, it is ever the same.

"Verdi colli del Casentin. . . ." Green and fresh



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BIBBIENA



IN THE CASENTINO

with budding foliage ; it must have been in the month of April that Dante wrote the words.

We cross the Archiano and pass onward through the fair valley outstretched before us—a trembling sea of pale green where the flickering shadows rest on fields of flax and millet, and the sprouting lance-like shoots of young corn which carpet the glades. The Casentino is watered with little streams of grey rushing water, by whose banks the willows grow low down to the water's edge. Their opening leaves on the slender branches seem like a shower of emerald flakes caught midway in their flight. On every side is the magic vision of flowering bloom ; plum-trees which seem to have brought forth a hoard of wintry snow, and a spinney of young birch-trees hovering in the background is seen through a ravishing mist of cherry blossom, while in this first awakening of the year, the almond sprays have the faint rosy tint of mother-of-pearl against the blue sky.

The land is thinly peopled and there is but little sign of life. By the wayside, the great milk-white oxen yoked together seem to stand ever patiently in the sunshine, awaiting some mysterious process of husbandry. But as we draw near Poppi the world awakens from its sequestered slumber ; we cross an arched bridge over the Arno, and begin the steep ascent of the hill, on whose summit the great castle of the Conti Guidi commands the whole valley. It looks hugely grim and forbidding from below, but when we have climbed the long paved footway and are near at hand, we cannot fail to be impressed with the massive grandeur of the tall strong tower and battlemented walls. Here purple iris and wallflowers grow on the

DANTE THE WAYFARER

ramparts, and the moat below is dappled with orchis and pink anemones.

Within the stately courtyard we find a picturesque staircase, somewhat after the design of that in the Bargello of Florence; the walls are covered with blazoned shields—the coats-of-arms in relief of the ancient lords of Poppi—while in a niche above is the statue of Count Guido da Battifolle, the friend of Dante.

Poppi itself is a little grey sleepy town, raised above all strenuous life; it has steep arcaded streets and a dim majestic church with a sunny piazza outside, where there is a glorious outlook from its lofty situation. In mediæval times it all belonged to the Conti Guidi, who were made imperial vicars by the Emperor Henry; they had much property and many castles in the Casentino, and as they were the hosts of the exile, the various castles of Poppi, Romena and Porciano all claim the honour of his presence within them. Boccaccio tells us also that Dante was received by the Count Guido Selvatico who owned the stronghold of Pratovecchio, and whose wife was Manessa, the daughter of that Buonconte whose story we have told. But his chief stay is believed to have been at Poppi, where tradition speaks of him as for a time secretary to the Countess Gherardesca, the daughter of that Count Ugolino with whom is connected the awful tragedy of the Tower of Hunger at Pisa.

Her husband was this young Count Guido da Battifolle, of whom is the fine statue on the staircase of the castle of Poppi. He is taken in the prime of gallant youth, clad in armour, with one hand on the hilt of his sword while the other holds a dagger. The curly



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STAIRCASE INSIDE POPPI CASTLE

IN THE CASENTINO

head of the young count is uncovered, and he raises it with stately pride.

Of that castle of Poppi there are other reminiscences. Dante once alludes to "la buona Gualdrada," whose bedchamber is still pointed out within these walls. Villani tells a pretty story about her. He speaks of her father as "il buono messere Bellincione Berti de' Ravignani onorevole cittadino di Firenze." He lived in the twelfth century, and Cacciaguida, the ancestor of Dante, makes a delightful allusion to him in the *Paradiso*, when he is lamenting the good old times.

"Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto
di cuoio e d'osso, e venir dallo specchio
la donna sua senza il volto dipinto." *

("Bellincion Berti have I seen go with girdle of
bone and leather, and I saw his wife come from her
mirror with unpainted face.")

The fair daughter appears to have been worthy of her parentage. "When the Emperor Otho IV. came to Florence and saw the fair ladies of the city assembled in Santa Reparata in his honour, this maiden most pleased the Emperor; and her father saying to the Emperor that he had it in his power to bid her kiss him, the maiden made answer that there was no man living which should kiss her, save he were her husband; for the which speech the Emperor much commended her; and the said Count Guido being taken with love for her by reason of her graciousness, and by the counsel of the said Otho the Emperor

* *Par. xv. 112.*

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took her to wife, not regarding that she was of less noble lineage than he, nor regarding her dowry; whence all the Counts Guidi are born from the said Count and the said lady. . . ." *

Far to the left branches off the way to the lonely Consuma Pass, where the paved path which leads along the valley of the Solano calls up memories of the sturdy dominion of Count Guido Novello, grandson of the "buona Gualdrada." Having built the Porta Ghibellina at Florence, he made a new road to the Casentino, in order that he might be able to convey to his fortress of Poppi the armour, the crossbows and bucklers which he had taken from the arsenal of the great Republic. Villani relates that one day this Guido was boastfully showing forth his castle and these warlike weapons to his uncle Tegrino, Count of Porciano, who quietly remarked that "he knew the Florentines only lent at a high rate of usury." This proved indeed true, for twenty years later, when he was in disgrace with Florence, her army crossed the mountain pass by his road, ravaged his lands and bore back all his spoils to the city.

As we make our way up the valley from Poppi, we cross the battlefield of Campaldino, of which the story has already been told—an undulating down sloping to the river, where centuries of peaceful cultivation have blotted out all memories of war and bloodshed. Passing onward by the shady bank of the Arno, ere long there rises to view the high precipitous ridge crowned by the jagged ruins of the castle of Romena. The steep southern slopes are terraced with groves of

* Villani.

IN THE CASENTINO

olives, silvery in the sun and dusky grey in shadow; while dark cypresses climb up the northern side in straggling groups and stand out in ragged outline sharp and black against the sky.

Our road lies first through the prosperous little town of Pratovecchio, nestling in a sunny nook amid enshrouding trees, near the head of the Casentino valley. As we passed through the narrow arcaded street into the broad Piazza, we found that all the loyal *paesani*, men, women, and children, had come forth to mourn for their Sindaco, whose solemn funeral procession was passing round. It was attended by many brethren of the "Misericordia" in their hooded masks and enshrouding black garments—some to carry the bier and the others to follow with flaming torches. Priests in their robes walked behind, then the mourning women of the Sindaco's family bearing many candles, a guard of honour playing a muffled dirge, burghers of civic rank and dignity; while at set intervals came various little companies of children from the town itself and villages round, proudly holding aloft the ensigns of their schools, the little maidens in white and wearing veils; the whole a splendid flamboyant show of painted banners, torches and great wreaths of flowers. It was a stately ceremonial to behold; doubtless much the same as would have done honour to a lamented Podestà of the Middle Ages.

With such a scene must Dante have been too sadly familiar, in those stormy days of much violence and sudden death.

Turning from the Piazza, we pass a tall line of cypresses before reaching a bridge across the Arno, by whose sloping banks the women of Pratovecchio are

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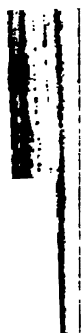
wont to kneel at the water's edge and wash their clothes on a big smooth stone. Here begins the ascent of the hill of Romena by a long winding lane, very steep and very hot in the full sunshine. As we approach a lonely farm half hidden by a clump of pines, a few sheep are cropping the scanty herbage on a shady bank, tended by a dark-eyed girl with a yellow kerchief on her head. We meet a rough country cart, drawn by a team of great oxen, coming from the village, which lies high up beyond another distant curve of the hill. Not until we have climbed almost to the summit of the ridge do we suddenly come in sight of the exquisite little Lombard church of Romena, with a circular apse and two rows of arches, divided by delicate columns which are carried all across the façade. The tower, half hidden in trees, is of fine proportion, square and massive. Within, it is a perfect gem of early architecture, with the rounded apse and lancet windows of beautiful finish ; while the columns in the dim shadowy nave support the rounded arches with curious carved capitals.

Nothing is changed since the days when Dante heard Mass here, being at that time the guest of Count Guido Selvatico in the castle near by. Thither we now ascend, leaving with regret the delightful secluded village of Romena, an ideal haunt of peace. As we mount upwards, round the terraces of olives, the rude brick wall by the wayside is fringed with iris, and in its niches and crevices the lizards, in coats of mail, dart in and out like flashes of emerald light. The banks are lined with purple orchids and blue grape hyacinth, and masses of green hellebore, the *erba nocca*, as they call it here. We pass through a grove



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ROMENA CASTLE



L. 1



IN THE CASENTINO

of cypress and pine to enter the ruined stronghold, where we face the ancient drawbridge with its rusty chains and rotten planks, and penetrate unchallenged into the great courtyard within, where we can still distinguish the dungeons of those old fighting lords of the country round. But to-day, doves build in the crannies of the grey battered walls, and they are gay with clumps of yellow wallflower, like the towers of San Gimignano.

Beautiful terraced gardens slope down to the south and west, with cherry and almond trees amid the silvery olives. But the chief glory of Romena is the view which extends over the Casentino on one side, and on the other towards the snow-tipped purple mountains of the Falterona and Pratomagno range, which close in the horizon. And far below in the valley, girdled with slender transparent green poplars and young cypresses here and there, the Arno ripples and splashes noisily down its stony bed.

Not far below the church of Romena is the site of the spring called Fonte Branda, and most probably the one alluded to in the *Inferno* by Maestro Adamo, as it is close to the scene of his tragic adventures. We remember that he cries out in his bitterness :

“Ma s'io vedessi qui l'anima trista
di Guido o d'Alessandro o di lor frate,
per Fonte Branda non darei la vista.” *

(“But if I could see *here* [in Hell] the wretched soul of Guido or of Alessandro or of their brother,

* *Inf.* xxx. 76.

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I would not lose that sight for all the cooling waters of Fonte Branda.")

In the whole of this neighbourhood the most striking and interesting reference is that which Dante makes to the ascent of Monte Falterona, from whence he poured his tremendous imprecation against the whole of the Val d'Arno. Ampère has a few suggestive words to say on this subject.

"Dante a certainement gravi le sommet de la Falterona. C'est sur ce sommet d'où l'on embrasse toute la vallée de l'Arno, qu'il faut lire la singulière imprécation que le poète a prononcée contre la vallée toute entière. Il suit le cours du fleuve et, en avançant, il marque tous les lieux qu'il rencontre d'une invective ardente. Plus il marche, plus sa haine redouble de violence et d'âpreté. C'est un morceau de topographie satirique dont je ne connais aucun autre exemple."

As Dante passes through the second circle of the Purgatorio, he is asked by Guido del Duca whence he comes, and he replies :

"Ed io : ' Per mezza Toscana si spazia
un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona,
e cento miglia di corso nol sazia.
Di sopr' esso rech' io questa persona. . . .'
'Se ben lo intendimento tuo accarno
con lo intelletto,' allora mi rispose
quei che prima dicea, 'tu parli d'Arno.'
E l'altro disse a lui : 'Perchè nascose
questi il vocabol di quella riviera,
pur com' uom fa dell' orribili cose ?'
E l'ombra, che di ciò domandata era,

IN THE CASENTINO

si sdebitò così : 'Non so, ma degno
ben è che il nome di tal valle pera :
Chè dal principio suo, dov' è sì pregno,
l'alpestro monte, ond' è tronco Peloro,
che in pochi lochi passa oltra quel segno,
Infin là 've si rende per ristoro
di quel che il ciel della marina asciuga,
ond' hanno i fiumi ciò che va con loro,
Virtù così per nimica si fuga
da tutti, come biscia, o per sventura
del loco o per mal uso che li fruga :
Ond' hanno sì mutata lor natura
gli abitator della misera valle,
che par che Circe gli avesse in pastura.
Tra brutti porci, più degni di galle
che d'altro cibo fatto in uman uso,
dirizza prima il suo povero calle.
Botoli trova poi, venendo giùso,
ringhiosi più che non chiede lor possa,
ed a lor, disdegnosa, torce il muso.
Vassi cadendo, e quanto ella più ingrossa,
tanto più trova di can farsi lupi
la maladetta e sventura fossa.
Discesa poi per più pelaghi cupi,
trova le volpi, sì piene di froda
che non temono ingegno che le occupi. . . .'"*

(" And I [Dante]: 'There takes its winding course through the middle of Tuscany a small river [the Arno], which rises in Monte Falterona, and a course of a hundred miles does not suffice for it. From its banks do I bring this body [meaning, I

* *Purg.* xiv. 16.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

was born at Florence]. . . 'If,' then answered me he who had been the first to speak, 'I rightly understand thy meaning; it is of the Arno thou speakest.'

"And the other [Rinieri] said to him [Guido]: 'Why did he hide the name of that river, as a man doth in describing things too terrible to be named.' And the shade to whom the question was addressed acquitted himself as follows: 'I know not, but it is right that the name of the whole valley should perish. For, from its source, where that mountain chain [the Apennines], whence Cape Pelorum was cut off, swells to so great an elevation, that in few places does it [the Apennine chain] exceed the height that it attains on Monte Falterona, down to that point where it [the river] yields itself up to restore what the sky has dried up from the sea in vapours, whence the rivers receive, in the form of rain, that which goes with them; virtue is thus hunted away by all even as a serpent, and this is either owing to some evil destiny inherent in the locality, which disposes men's minds to vice, or through bad habit that stimulates them to evil.

"Wherefore the dwellers in this miserable valley have so changed their nature that it would seem as though Circe had them in her feeding. It first directs its insignificant course through a country inhabited by foul hogs [the vassals in the Casentino], more deserving of acorns than any other food created for human use. And as it comes lower, it finds curs [the Aretines] more snarling than is befitting their power; and from them it [the Arno] contemptuously turns away its snout. It flows on downwards, and in proportion as that

IN THE CASENTINO

accursed and ill-fated ditch [the valley of the Arno] increases in size, so much the more does it find the dogs turning into wolves [the Florentines].

“ ‘Descending after this through many a dark gorge, it finds the foxes [the Pisans] so full of fraud, that they have no fear that any cunning can ever master them. . . .’ ”)

We can omit nothing from this long and terrible denunciation of the cities of the Val d'Arno, from the mountain height whence Dante could trace the whole course of the river, winding in and out like a silver thread across the broad valley, until it was lost to sight in the purple haze of the far-off Mediterranean. If we read this canto of the *Purgatorio* on the spot itself, we can more fully realise how strong was the passionate indignation which so flooded the poet's soul that he was blind to the magnificence of the scene outstretched before him, from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic.

The whole ascent of Monte Falterona is of keen interest, and it is no digression to follow so intimately in the steps of Dante. Beyond Pratovecchio, higher up towards the head of the Casentino, we pass the little town of Stia still sleeping in the early dawn, and our way leads beneath the ruined castle of Porciano, which claims to have been another refuge of the exiled poet, and which certainly belonged to a member of the Conti Guidi family. It may well be that from this vantage ground, he followed the winding course of the Arno to its source on the ridge above, and climbed to the mountain top.

We wonder where the spot was pointed out to him

DANTE THE WAYFARER

in which the peasant dug up a hoard of silver pieces !
He tells the story thus in the *Convivio* :

"Veramente io vidi lo luogo nelle coste d'un monte in Toscana, che si chiama Falterona, dove il più vile villano di tutta la contrada, zappando, più d'uno staio di Santélene d'argento finissimo vi trovò, che forse più di mille anni l'avevano aspettato." *

"Santélene" appears to have been the name of a coin current in the Middle Ages, and may have been originally derived from St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great.

We mount upward through every zone of Italian vegetation, from olive groves and vineyards and a tangle of Spanish broom to budding chestnuts of delicate sea-green foliage, russet beech-trees and scattered pines. Here the slopes are carpeted with the exquisite purple flowers of the mountain crocus. On the lower ground the only sound which broke the stillness was the tinkling of goat-bells, but as we rise to the higher and purer air, where the birds find a safe refuge, the air is full of melody. Cuckoos make answer to each other from the fir-tree's shade, the mellow note of a blackbird floats on the breeze, and the larks soar upward to the blue heaven with

"The wild
Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping."

A girl tending her sheep on the upland pasture breaks forth into song, lilting the strain of a Tuscan ballad as she moves slowly onward, followed by a great white sheep-dog of the Apennines.

* *Conv.* IV., ii. 76.

IN THE CASENTINO

Above the near ridge clothed with stunted beech-trees, the actual summit of Monte Falterona is deep in snow, soft and treacherous as it melts beneath an April sun. Outspread before our eyes is the whole fair valley of the Casentino, a broad, deep ocean of mellow light and shade, a symphony in green and grey, with an infinite gamut of soft delicious hues. Dimly we can trace the course of the Arno, girdled with foliage, threading onward in shining curves down the valley, while the road to Rome stretches out like a white ribbon far away to the south, till it is lost in the dreamy swell of distant mountains. But a faint purple mist hides from us the far distant sea, that "tremolar della marina" of which the poet speaks, and which perchance he beheld from this very spot. Was it from this mountain top that Dante watched the immortal sunrise?

"Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,
che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
dell' aer puro infino al primo giro. . . .
L'alba vinceva l' ora mattutina
che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano
conobbi il tremolar della marina." †

("Sweet hue of eastern sapphire, which gathered over the serene aspect of the pure air, even to the first circle. . . . The dawn conquered the morning breeze which fled before it, so that from afar I recognised the tremulous glimmer of the sea.")

* *Purg.* i. 13.

† *Purg.* i. 115.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

A mountain top appears to be a specially favoured place for incantation and the calling down of retribution. We recall to mind that seer of olden days who was taken from one high place to another, in the vain hope that he might curse from thence the enemies of Balak—the chosen people. "From the top of the rocks I see him, from the hills I behold him"—but only words of blessing were suffered to come from the lips of Balaam.

Dante cannot forgive those who have so irapiously rebelled against his emperor, the Lord's anointed, yet "even in the thunder of his fiercest invective we distinguish the clarion note of the warrior poet, who smites in the spirit of the patriot, and the worshipper of the God of holiness."



A. W. Andrews

ON THE SLOPES OF MONTE FALTERONA



CHAPTER XV
HENRY, THE BELOVED EMPEROR;
THE HOPE OF ITALY

“ Il faut saluer au nom de Dante : . . ce malheureux Henri VII., celui dont il attendait tout ce que désirait son âme ardente : retour dans sa patrie, vengeance de ses ennemis, triomphe de ses indées politiques ; celui dont il prophétisait avec des paroles qui semblaient empruntées à Isafe, les prochains triomphes, et qui ne vint dans cette Italie, où il était tant attendu, que pour y mourir.”

AMPÈRE.

CHAPTER XV

HENRY, THE BELOVED EMPEROR ; THE HOPE OF ITALY

IN order to realise the absolute ruin of all Dante's eager hopes, and to understand his subsequent wanderings, it will be needful for a while to follow the story of the Emperor Henry. As we have seen, he was in arms before the walls of Cremona when Dante wrote that memorable epistle urging him to immediate action against Florence.

"What wilt thou have accomplished, thou only ruler of the world, when thou hast twisted the neck of rebellious Cremona?" were his prophetic words. "Dost thou not know, most excellent of princes, and from the watch-tower of highest exaltation dost thou not perceive where the fox [Florence] skulks in safety from the hunters?"*

But this impassioned appeal was of no avail, for other counsels prevailed. Much precious time was wasted upon the disastrous siege of Brescia, which after terrible suffering both to besieged and besiegers, at length surrendered, from famine, on September 16 of that year 1311.

* Epist. vii. trans. by Wicksteed.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

Meantime the Florentines had formed a powerful league with the Guelfs of Bologna, Lucca, Siena, Pistoia, and Volterra; and when Henry sent ambassadors to Florence in October, they were not suffered to enter the city, and—with the secret consent of the Priors—they were actually set upon by highwaymen, and had to flee by way of the Mugello, in peril of their lives. After this it was but an idle menace of the Emperor to put Florence "under the ban." He was at that time in Genoa, where there was much plague, and in the following month of November a sad misfortune befell him in the sickness and death of his dear wife, the Empress Margaret. "Which was held to be a holy and good woman, and was daughter of the Duke of Brabant; and was buried in the Minor Friars with great honour," is Villani's brief notice of this tragedy.

"It has never been believed or said that yoke-fellows of such supreme mutual love had ever existed before this couple, but Henry was never seen to shed a tear."* He had need of all his fortitude, but we can well believe that if he gave no outward sign, the bereaved husband never rallied from the crushing blow which took from him the desire of his eyes—the loved companion who had forsaken home and kin to take part in his great enterprise—who had shared alike all his perils and all his hopes. I have sought in vain for traces of her tomb in Genoa, but she needs no monument to her fame, for she is of those just ones whose memory "smells sweet and blossoms in their dust."

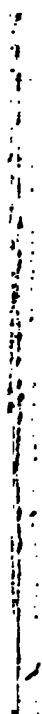
After the cities of Cremona and Brescia had rebelled against his yoke, aided by the Florentines, the Emperor

* Mussato.



A. W. Andrews

CAMPO SANTO, PISA



THE BELOVED EMPEROR

proceeded to Pisa, where the Tuscan exiles crowded to meet him in the gardens of the Gambacorti, on the south bank of the Arno, near the Ponte di Mezzo. There is a tradition that Dante was amongst them and that he here met Petrarch, a child of seven, to whom the more famous poet appeared to be an old man, so worn was he and aged in aspect with trouble and much wandering. Yet, as a matter of fact, Dante was twelve years younger than Petrarch's father, Petrarca di Parenzo, his fellow exile at Arezzo, where his famous son was born in July 1304.

Dante has many allusions to Pisa in the *Divina Commedia*, of which the most familiar is the tragic story of the Tower of Famine, where so terrible a fate befell Conte Ugolino and his family. He thus relates it in the *Antenora*, where he is placed as a traitor to his country :

“ Tu dei saper ch'io fui Conte Ugolino,
e questi è l'Arcivescovo Ruggieri ;
or ti dirò perchè i son tal vicino.
Che per l'effetto de' suo' ma' pensieri,
fidandomi di lui, io fossi preso
e poscia morto, dir non è mestieri.
Però quel che non puoi avere inteso,
ciò è come la morte mia fu cruda,
udirai, e saprai se m'ha offeso.
Breve pertugio dentro dalla muda,
la qual per me ha il titol della fame
e in che convien ancor ch'altri si chiuda,
M'avea mostrata per lo suo forame
più lune già, quand' io feci il mal sonno,
che del futuro mi squarciò il velame.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

Quando fui desto innanzi la dimane,
pianger senti' fra il sonno i miei figliuoli,
ch' eran con meco, e domandar del pane. .
Già eran desti, e l'ora s'appressava
che il cibo ne soleva essere addotto,
e per suo sogno ciascun dubitava;
Ed io sentii chiavar l'uscio di sotto
'all orribile torre: ond' io guardai
nel viso a' miei figliuoi senza far motto.
Io non piangeva, sì dentro impietrai;
piangevan elli; ed Anselmuccio mio
disse: ' Tu guardi sì, padre, che hai? '
Però non lagrimai, nè rispos' io
tutto quel giorno, nè la notte appresso,
infin che l'altro sol nel mondo uscìa.
Come un poco di raggio si fu messo
nel doloroso carcere, ed io scorsi
per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso,
Ambo le mani per dolor mi morsi.
Ed ci, pensando ch' io 'l fessi per voglia
di manicar, di subito levorsi,
E disser: ' Padre, assai ci fia men doglia,
se tu mangi di noi: tu ne vestisti
queste misere carni, e tu le spoglia.'
Queta mi allor per non farli più tristi;
lo dì e l'altro stemmo tutti muti.
Ahi dura terra, perchè non t'apristi?
Poscio che fummo al quarto dì venuti,
Gaddo mi si gittò disteso a' piedi,
dicendo: ' Padre mio, chè non m'aiuti? '
Quivi morì; e come tu mi vedi,
vid' io cascar li tre ad uno ad uno
tra il quinto dì e il sesto: ond' io mi diedi
Già cieco a brancolar sopra ciascuno,

THE BELOVED EMPEROR

e due dî li chiamai poi che fur morti ;
poscia, più che il dolor, potè il digiuno." *

(" Know that I was Count Ugolino, and this is the Archbishop Ruggieri: now I will tell you why I am his neighbour here. That it was through his evil devices that I, trusting in him, was taken and afterwards put to death it is not needful to say. But that which you cannot have learnt, how cruel was my death, you shall hear, and know how he has wronged me. A narrow hole within that mew, which from me bears the name of Famine, and in which others will yet be imprisoned, had through its opening already shown me several moons, when I had the evil dream which rent for me the veil of the future. . . . When I awoke before the dawn, I heard my sons, who were with me, weeping and asking for bread. . . . They now were awake, and the hour approached at which they were wont to bring our food, and each was troubled about his dream, when below I heard the door of the horrible tower locked up: then I looked into the faces of my sons without uttering a word. I did not weep, turning to stone within me; but they wept, and my little Anselm said: 'Thou lookest so—father what ails thee?'

"But I shed no tear, nor answered all that day, nor the next night, until another sun came forth upon the world. When a faint ray pierced the doleful prison, and I read in their four faces the aspect of my own, I bit my hands in agony. And they, thinking that I did it through the craving for food, rose up of a sudden and said: 'Father, it

* *Inf.* xxxiii. 13.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

will give us far less pain if thou wilt eat of us ; thou didst clothe us with this miserable flesh, and do thou strip it off.'

"Then I calmed myself, that I might not make them more unhappy ; that day and the next we were all silent. Ah, cruel earth ! why did'st thou not open ? When we came to the fourth day, Gaddo threw himself stretched out at my feet, crying : ' My father, hast thou no help for me ? ' There he died ; and, even as you see me, I saw the three fall one by one, between the fifth day and the sixth : then, already blind, I took to groping over each of them, and for three days I called aloud on them, after they were dead ; then hunger accomplished that which grief could not do.")

Such is the awful story as told with such dramatic minuteness by the poet. We learn from history that Count Ugolino della Gherardesca was head of a Guelf party in Pisa, but in order to become supreme he entered into a plot with the Ghibelline Archbishop Ruggieri, who betrayed him. Ugolino—with two of his sons, Gaddo and Uguccione, and two grandsons, Nino and Anselmuccio, a lad of fifteen—was imprisoned in a tower which was close to where the modern clock-tower now stands. When Guido of Montefeltro had command of the Pisan army in the following March, 1289, the keys of the grim prison were cast into the Arno, and the unfortunate captives were left to die of starvation.

There is a touch of profound bitterness in those last words, as we interpret them—that the agony of seeing his dear ones die by torture before his eyes had not

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killed Ugolino with grief, but that in the end he too died of starvation. "En effet, on meurt plus souvent de la seconde que de la première." We need not point out the terrible pathos of the whole description—it speaks for itself.

The Torre della Fame was in ruins in the sixteenth century, and has long since disappeared. Villani gives a very interesting incident which befel Count Ugolino a short time before his fall. "When he was called Lord of Pisa by all, and when he was in the greatest state and happiness, he prepared a rich feast on his birthday, and invited thereto his sons and grandsons, and all his lineage and kinsfolk, both men and women, with great pomp in dress and ornaments. . . ." All his grandeur and possessions and preparations for his great festival the count showed to a certain Venetian nobleman, a man of wit and learning named Marco Lombardo. "And he asked him: 'Marco, what thinkest thou of all this?'

"The sage answered and said unto him: 'You are better prepared for evil fortune than any nobleman of Italy.' And the count fearing these words of Marco's said: 'Why?' and Marco answered, 'Because the wrath of God is the only thing lacking to you.'

"And of a truth the wrath of God suddenly came upon him, as it pleased God, because of his treachery. . . ." This Marco Lombardo was a friend of Dante's, who meets him in the Purgatorio, where he is the chief speaker during most of Canto XVI., and together the two philosophers converse

"In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,

DANTE THE WAYFARER

Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost."*

On hearing the story of Ugolino, the indignation of Dante knows no bounds. His sympathies may have been the more touched from his friendship with Gherardesca, the only daughter of Ugolino, the wife of Conte Guido Novello, who had received the poet so hospitably in his castle of Poppi. In his fierce imprecation he calls upon the Arno to drown the city which could be guilty of such barbarity.

"Ahi Pisa, vituperio delle genti
del bel paese là dove il 'sì' suona,
poi che i vicini a te punir son lenti,
Movasi la Caprara e la Gorgona,
e faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce,
sì ch' egli anneghi in te ogni persona.
Chè se il Conte Ugolino aveva voce
d'aver tradita te delle castella,
non dovei tu i figliuoi porre a tal croce. . . ."†

("Ah, Pisa, shame of all people of the beautiful land where 'sì' is heard—since thy neighbours are slow to punish thee, may the Caprara and Gorgona move, and dam up the Arno at its mouth, that it may drown in thee every living soul! For it fame reported that Count Ugolino betrayed thy castles, thou oughtest not to have put his sons to such torture. . . .")

Ampère remarks that here is a new proof of the geographical exactitude of the great poet. "Cette

* Milton.

† *Inf.* xxxiii. 79.



A. W. Andrews:

CLOISTERS OF SAN FRANCESCO, PISA

Burial-place of Ugoino and his sons



THE BELOVED EMPEROR

imagination peut paraître bizarre et forcée si l'on regarde la carte; car l'île de la Gorgone est assez loin de l'embouchure de l'Arno, et j'avais toujours pensé ainsi jusqu'au jour où, étant monté sur la tour de Pise, je fus frappé de l'aspect que, de là, me présentait la Gorgone. Elle semblait fermer l'Arno. Je compris alors comment Dante avait pu avoir naturellement cette idée, qui m'avait semblé étrange, et son imagination fut justifiée à mes yeux. . . . Ce fait seul suffirait pour montrer combien un voyage est une bonne explication d'un poète."

It is in a "grave retired place," apart from the busy hum of life, standing in the sequestered close of green turf, that we come suddenly upon that wonderful group, unique in grandeur—of majestic cathedral, baptistery, church of the Campo Santo, and massive Leaning Tower—a spiral of lacework in stone, the far-famed marvel of the world. Every traveller has exhausted his eloquence on these colossi; what remains to be said, save that as we see them now unchanged through the centuries, so we cannot doubt that Dante beheld them?

As we turn eastward and skirt the dreamy town, with its belfries and cupolas and streets silent in the gauze of noon-day heat, we reach the desecrated church of San Francesco, where, at the entrance of the cloister, the stone is still pointed out which covers the mortal remains of Ugolino and his sons—the victims of that tragedy, whose shuddering horror time cannot dim.

The ruins may still be seen of the castle of Caprona, about five miles from Pisa, on a hill near the Arno, which has a most interesting connection with Dante.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

When the fiends crowd round him on the edge of the chasm of the Barrators, he is reminded of the men-at-arms who marched out of the surrendered citadel, and the look of fear on their faces.

“E così vid’ io già temer li fanti
ch’ uscivan patteggiati di Caprona,
veggendo sè tra nimici cotanti.” *

(“And thus I once saw the foot-soldiers, who marched out of Caprona under a safe-conduct, show their fear at seeing themselves amongst so many enemies.”)

It was in August 1289, soon after the battle of Campaldino, that the Tuscan Guelfs took this fortress, and if Dante did not take part in the siege, this vivid touch of description assures us that at least he was present at the surrender.

It was not until April 23, 1312, that the Emperor Henry departed from Pisa with his people, and took the way of the Maremma, now a dreary and desolate plain, but formerly a jungle of dense wood, with a luxuriant underwood of tamarisk, myrtle and creeping weeds—a wild marshy district, the home of that malaria which was the undoing of La Pia, and which filled the hospitals of Valdichiana. Dante thus gives his impression of it :

“Non frondi verdi, ma di color fosco ;
non rami schietti, ma nodosi e involti
non pomi v’eran, ma stecchi con tosc.” †

* *Inf.* xxi. 94.

† *Inf.* xiii. 4.



A. W. Andrews

CAPRONA

11

12

13

THE BELOVED EMPEROR

("The leaves were not green, but of a dusky hue; the branches were not smooth, but knotted and twisted; there were no apples, but dry sticks with poison.")

Here the Emperor lingered not, but passed through the country of Siena, by Orvieto and onward to Viterbo, where he abode many days. Some writers assert that Dante accompanied his beloved master, with reviving hope, in this journey to Rome. He certainly appears to be familiar with Viterbo, for he describes the Bulicame, a hot sulphurous spring near Viterbo, which he compares to Phlegethon, one of the rivers of the Inferno.

"Quale del Bulicame esce un ruscello,
che parton poi tra lor le peccatrici,
tal per l'arena giù sen giva quello.
Lo fondo suo ed ambo le pendici
fatt' eran pietra, e i margini da lato. . . ."

("As from the Bulicame issues a streamlet, which the sinful women share amongst themselves, so this ran down through the sand. The bottom and both the shelving banks were petrified, and also the margins near it.")

There are one or two other allusions to Viterbo and the Bulicame. Henry VII. was delayed at this fortified hill-town because the League of Tuscany opposed his advance, and he was unable to enter Rome by

* *Inf.* xiv. 79.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

the gate of San Piero, but at length he succeeded in assailing the fortress of the Emilian bridge, and finally entered the Eternal City on May 7. Having received the sanction of the Pope, he determined to have himself crowned by the cardinals in the church of San Giovanni in Laterano, on the south bank of the Tiber, as he could not obtain access to St. Peter's, but as soon as this was accomplished, "each party being defended by bars and bolts and great strongholds," the newly crowned Emperor of the World was compelled to make a hasty retreat to Tivoli for fear of capture. The reference of Dante to "sopra te corona e mitrio" * is supposed to be suggested by the ritual of the coronation ceremony. Also the lines :

"Se i Barbari, venendo di tal plaga,
che ciascun giorno d'Elice si copra. . .
Vedendo Roma e l'ardua sua opra
stupefaciensi, quando Laterano
alle cose mortali andò di sopra;
Io, che al divino dall' umano,
all' eterno dal tempo era venuto. . ." †

("If the Barbarians coming from such a region as every day is spanned by Helice . . . on seeing Rome and her mighty works—what time the Lateran transcended mortal things—were stupefied; what then of me who to the divine from the human, to the eternal from time had passed. . .")

Plumptre suggests that this may well be a reminis-

* *Purg.* xxvii. 142.

† *Par.* xxxi. 31.

THE BELOVED EMPEROR

cence of the impression produced by the Lateran and its ceremonial on the Emperor's German troops.

With all respect for the enthusiasm of Dante, we feel that his divine Arrigo had missed his long-looked-for triumph, and that his retreat was clandestine and inglorious. We read that he passed through the region of Perugia "destroying and burning, that from there he came to Cortona, then to Arezzo, from whence he entered the territory of Florence." With his high aims and desire to unite Guelfs and Ghibellines, he had brought not peace but a sword. After this followed the disastrous siege of Florence, which lasted until the end of October. The Emperor's health had broken down, and "perceiving that he could not gain the city by agreement, and that the Florentines would not give battle, he departed with his host on the night following All Saints, and, having burnt his camp, he passed the Arno by the way he came. . . . On his going the Florentines sounded the bells and all men stood to arms." *

The imperial army withdrew to San Casciano, then to Poggibonsi, where Henry abode for awhile, restoring the fortress on the hill, but he was in much want of rest, and was continually harassed by the enemy. In March 1313 he withdrew to Pisa, without halting, and there remained for some months. When he departed in the following August the end was drawing near; his sickness increased but he crossed the Elsa, and passed by Poggibonsi, Colle, and below the gates of Siena, with various skirmishes, till he reached "the village of Buonconvento, twelve miles beyond Siena.

* Villani.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

There he rapidly grew worse, and as it pleased God, he passed from this life on the day of St. Bartholomew, August 24, 1313."*

He was buried at Pisa, with great sorrow and also with great honour. This was the end of the Emperor Henry.

"He was wise and just and gracious, valiant, firm in arms, virtuous and catholic . . . and if he had lived longer he would have done the greatest things."*

In that grave in the Campo Santo of Pisa were buried all the passionate hopes of Dante : return to his native city as a true patriot, and the dream to which he had clung so persistently, of one united realm under his beloved prince, which would restore the divine order of the world. The sun had set for him, and henceforth his life's path was amongst the shadows.

The Emperor Henry was of too sensitive a nature, too ready to see both sides of the question, to succeed in those rough and violent days. It needed a strong, hard man with nerves of iron, and one stern fixed purpose before him from which no thought of policy or pity would make him swerve in his headlong course, and who would not shrink from trampling friend and foe alike beneath his horse's hoofs.

Ampère sees in the Emperor's tomb the emblem of his life, and adds, "*il a l'air de dormir mal.*" But it seems to me that in this last remark the prose poet does not show his usual clear insight—led astray by the misguided ingenuity of the sculptor, who has failed to set forth the calm peace which befits the majesty of death. We may accept the signs of restless-

* Villani.



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TOMB OF EMPEROR HENRY, PISA

By special permission of the Administration

THE BELOVED EMPEROR

ness as typical of failure in the aims of that chivalrous soul, but surely if that "excellentissimus principum" was rightly judged by Dante he was a good and faithful man, and should rest well after life's troubled dream.

In the dark hour of his cruel bereavement the poet finds a ray of comfort in the thought of a throne and crown prepared for his hero, as the gracious Beatrice points out to him :

" Il quel gran seggio, a che tu gli occhi tieni
per la corona che già v'è su posta,
prima che tu a queste nozze ceni,
Sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,
dell alto Enrico, ch'a drizzare Italia
verrà in prima che ella sia disposta." *

("On that great throne whereon thine eyes are fixed, for the sake of the crown already placed upon it—before thou shalt sup at this wedding feast—the soul shall sit of the noble Henry, that is to be Augustus on earth ; he who shall come to guide Italy before she is ready for it.")

If on that "gran seggio" of highest heaven the imperial Henry found his reward, may we not hope that room was reserved by his side for the faithful and devoted wife that so, beautiful in their lives, in death they may not have been divided.

* *Par.* xxx. 133.

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CHAPTER XVI
RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS
FORLORN

“ Veramente io sono stato legno senza vela e senza governo, portato a diversi porti e foci e liti dal vento secco che vapora la dolorosa povertà.” *

•

Convivio, i. 3.

(“ I have become like a ship without sails and without a rudder, borne to many ports and straits and shores by the arid wind which sad poverty brings forth.”)

CHAPTER XVI

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS FORLORN

COULD any description be more pathetic than this, of the exile's utter desolation after the death of his Emperor? A ship without sails and without rudder, drifting from shore to shore at the mercy of the wind! Poverty, and *now* hopeless exile, were bitter indeed, and his dearest earthly hopes had made shipwreck upon a rock-bound coast. Yet, amidst every loss and well-nigh despair, there remained to him his great work, which he found strength and courage to continue. "As earth sinks into shadow, heaven shines radiant around him."

It is very difficult to trace any exact record of Dante's wanderings after the coronation of Henry; for he was not with the imperial army before the walls of Florence, and we are left to local traditions, of which one tells us that he found a shelter for awhile with a Ghibelline friend, Bosone, who had a castle near Gubbio. He is supposed to have helped the young son of his friend with his studies, and in a sonnet attributed to him, he praises the lad for his progress. This Bosone was a man of letters who, in later years, lamented the death of Dante in verse, and

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is also said to have been the first commentator of the *Divina Commedia*. The little mediæval town of Gubbio, which is about thirty miles east of Arezzo, lies on the slopes of Monte Calvo, in the Apennines. Dante alludes to it as the birthplace of the miniature-painter and illuminator, Oderisi, whom he recognises in the Purgatorio :

“ ‘ O,’ dissì lui, ‘ non sei tu Oderisi,
l’onor d’Agobbio, e l’onor di quell’ arte
che “alluminare” è chiamata in Parisi?’
‘ Frate,’ diss’ egli, ‘ più ridon le carte
che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese :
l’onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte.
Ben non sare’ io stato sì cortese
mentre ch’ io vissi, per lo gran disio
dell’ eccellenza, ove mio core intese.
Di tal superbia qui sì paga il fio. . . .’ ” *

(“ ‘ Oh,’ I said to him, ‘ art not thou Oderisi,
the pride of Gubbio, and the honour of that art
which in Paris is called “illuminating”?’ ”

“ ‘ Brother,’ said he, ‘ the leaves which Frank the
Bolognese paints are more pleasing : the honour is
all his now, and mine but in part. Truly I should
not have been so courteous while I lived, because
of the great desire of excelling on which my heart
was bent. For such pride the fine is paid
here. . . .’ ”)

He then continues with a grand dissertation on the empty nature of fame and the vanity of human glory, which we must unfortunately omit.

* *Purg.* xi. 79.

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

It was another citizen of Gubbio, Cante de' Gabrielli, who was Podestà of Florence in 1302, and who gave sentence against the poet, condemning him to banishment, and confiscating his property—the beginning of all his troubles.

There is a popular belief that Dante took refuge in the Benedictine monastery of Santa Croce di Fonte Avellana, on the slopes of Monte Catria, near Gubbio, and that in the wild solitude of that peaceful spot "he there composed no small portion of his great work." It appears quite natural that in the hour of grief and disappointment he should find rest and peace in that or some other religious house. We find a vivid description of this Fonte Avellana in the *Paradiso*, given by Peter Damian, who had once been Abbot there.

"Tra due liti d'Italia surgon sassi
e non molto distanti alla tua patria
tanto che i tuoni assai suonan più bassi,
E fanno un gibbo, che si chiama Catria,
di sotto al quale è consecrato un ermo,
che suol esser disposto a sola latria.
 . . . Quivi.
al servizio di Dio mi fei sì fermo,
Che pur con cibi di liquor d'ulivi,
lievemente passava caldi e gieli,
contento nei pensier contemplativi.
Render solea quel chiostro a questi cieli
fertilmente, ed ora è fatto vano,
sì che tosto convien che si riveli.
In quel loco fu' io Pier Damiano. . . ."

* *Par.* xxi 106.

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("Between two shores of Italy, not far from thy native land, there rise cliffs so high that the thunders sound far below them, and they form a ridge that is called Catria, beneath which a hermitage is consecrated, which before was only given to worship. . . . There in God's service I became so steadfast that feeding only on the juice of olives, I lightly endured both heat and cold, contented with my contemplative thoughts. That cloister of old bore a fertile harvest for these heavens, but is now found so barren that its shame will soon be laid bare. I, Peter of Damian, was in that place. . . .")

In early life this Peter Damian was a swineherd near Ravenna, but his brother, who strangely enough appears to have been Archdeacon of Ravenna, had him educated; he became first a teacher, and then entering the monastery of Santa Croce, was promoted to be abbot, and later bishop and cardinal.

Ampère made a pilgrimage to Fonte Avellana, which he describes with much charm, his uncritical mind finding the place haunted with memories of Dante. One remark of his, many travellers will agree with:

"C'est toujours avec un singulier plaisir que je dors une nuit dans ces cellules, dont les habitants ordinaires y dormiront toutes leurs nuits jusqu'à la dernière."

We can well imagine that when in this neighbourhood Dante, on a pilgrimage to the home of St. Francis, may have passed through Perugia, to which he only devotes one line of vivid description:

"Onde Perugia sente freddo e caldo
da porta Sola. . . ."

* *Par.* xi. 46.

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

(“Where Perugia feels the cold and the heat through the Porta Sole.* . .”)

Ampère thus illustrates the exactitude of the description: “J’ai traversé Pérouse; j’y ai éprouvé le double effet du mont Ubaldo, qui, dit le poète, fait ressentir à cette ville le froid et la chaleur; c’est-à-dire qui tour à tour réfléchit sur elle les rayons du soleil, et lui envoie des vents glacés. J’arrivai dans cette ville par une brillante nuit d’hiver; j’eus le temps de commenter tout à mon aise les bises de l’Ubaldo, en gravissant au petit pas les sinuosités de la route qui conduit aux portes de la ville fortifiée par un pape. Après de longs détours, je me croyais arrivé, quand je vis au-dessus de ma tête le double étage des murs de la forteresse et les hauts glacis qui le défendent. Aux portes de cette cité, d’un aspect guerrier, et qui fut la patrie de plusieurs grands capitaines italiens, j’étais sous l’impression de quelque chose de formidable; cette impression ne diminua pas quand j’entrai dans la ville par une large rue bordée de palais muets; quand j’errai dans d’autres rues plus étroites au pied de ces vastes demeures où ne brillait pas une lumière, d’où ne descendait aucun bruit, d’où ne sortait personne; quand j’entrevis les gigantesques portes étrusques grandies par les clartés de la lune et par les ombres de la nuit. C’était bien la triste Pérouse, *Perugia dolente*.”

But the special charm of Perugia is the marvellous impression which, from its hill summit, it gives of

* That Eastern gate exposed to the full sweep of the keen east wind.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

glorious space and airy vastness. We look down upon the surrounding hill-cities and the broad plain below with a strange sense of height and isolation, rarely equalled elsewhere.

Dante thus places Assisi, the abode of his favourite saint :

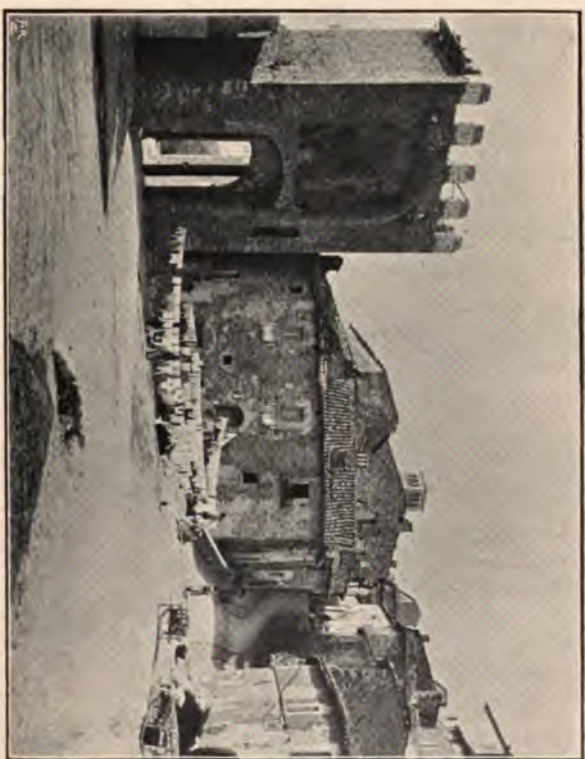
“ Intra Tupino e l'acqua che discende
del colle eletto del beato Ubaldo,
fertile costa d'alto monte pende. . . .
Di questa costa, là dov' ella frange
più sua rattezza, nacque al mondo un sole,
come fa questo talvolta di Gange.
Però chi d'esso loco fa parole
non dica *Ascesi*, che direbbe corto,
ma *Oriente*, se proprio dir vuole.” *

(“ Between Tupino and the stream which descends from the hill chosen by the blessed Ubaldo, a fertile slope hangs from the lofty mountain. From this slope, where the hill is less steep, there was born into the world a sun, as this one rises at times from out the Ganges. Wherefore whoso speaketh of that place, let him not say *Assisi*, for that says little, but *Orient* if he would rightly name it.”)

Then follows that exquisite story of St. Francis, which time cannot dim ; oft repeated but never wearisome :

“ Non era ancor molto lontan dall' orto,
ch' ei cominciò a far sentir la terra
della sua gran virtute alcun conforto ;

* *Par.* xi. 43.



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GATEWAY, ASSISI

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RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

Chè per tal donna giovinetto in guerra
del padre corse, a cui, com' alla morte,
la porta del piacer nessun disserra ;
Ed innanzi alla sua spirital corte,
et coram patre le si fece unito ;
poscia di dì in dì l'amò più forte.
Questa, privata del primo marito,
mille e cent' anni e più dispetta e scura
fino a costui si stette senza invito. . . .
Nè valse esser costante nè feroce,
sì che, dove Maria rimase giuso,
ella con Cristo salse in sulla croce.
Ma perch' io non proceda troppo chiuso,
Francesca e Povertà per questi amanti
prendi oromai nel mio parlar diffuso.
La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembianti
amore e meraviglia e dolce sguardo
faceano esser cagion di pensier santi. . . .
Tanto che il venerabile Bernardo
si scalzò prima, e retro a tanta pace
corse, e correndo gli parv' esser tardo. . . .
E poi che, per la sete del martiro,
nella presenza del Soldan superba
predico Cristo e gli altri che il seguirono. . . .
Nel crudo sasso, intra Tevere ed Arno,
da Cristo prese l'ultimo sigillo,
che le sue membra due anni portarno.
Quando a colui ch' a tanto ben sortillo
piacque di trarlo suso alla mercede,
ch' ei meritò nel suo farsi pusillo,
Ai frati suoi, sì com' a giuste rede,
raccomandò la sua donna più cara,
e comandò che l'amassero a fede ;
E del suo grembo l'anima preclara

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mover si volle, tornando al suo regno,
ed al suo corpo non volle altra bara." *

("He was not yet far distant from his rising when he began to make the earth feel some comfort from his great excellence; for in his youth he dared his father's wrath for such a lady, to whom, as unto death, no one unbars the gates of pleasure. And before his spiritual court, and in his father's presence, he was united to her, and ever loved her, day by day more fervently. She, bereft of her first husband, a thousand and a hundred years and more, despised and obscure, remained unwooed till his coming. . . . It availed her nothing to have been so constant and undaunted, that when Mary stayed below, she mounted up with Christ upon the cross. But lest I tell it too obscurely, Francis and Poverty as these two lovers, understand from my rambling speech. Their concord and their joyous appearance, the love and wonder and tender looks, were the cause of holy thoughts; so that the venerable Bernard was the first to cast off his sandals and ran to follow so great a peace, and in running, thought himself too slow. . . ." Egidius, Sylvester and others follow in his steps, and his order is founded and confirmed by Pope Innocent and Honorius.

"And when with thirst of martyrdom, in the proud presence of the Soldan, he preached Christ and those who followed him. . . . Then on the rough rock between the Tiber and the Arno †

* *Par.* xi. 55.

† Alvernia, in the Casentino, where St. Francis founded an oratory.

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

did he receive from Christ that final impression, which his limbs bore for two years.

"When it pleased Him, who chose thus to bless him, to raise him up to that reward which he had merited by his humility, he gave in charge his most dear lady to his brethren, as to his rightful heirs, and bade them love her faithfully. And from her bosom that soul so high and clear willed to depart, returning to his own realm, and would have no other bier for his body.")

In the dim aisles of the Franciscan church we can still read the story, painted by the hand of Giotto, of that mystic union with our Lady Poverty, which Dante pauses in high heaven to tell us.

Assisi is a place to dream of; that fair seraphic city set on a hill, with the great basilica and convent towering above the deserted streets and desolate palaces, set in the midst of a tangled wilderness of gardens. There is a nameless, mysterious charm about the old-world silent hill-town, where Francis spent his flamboyant, early life—the leader of gay young nobles as lord of love in their wild carousals. He was stayed in mid-career by a call from heaven, and passionately in earnest, whichever way he turned he became the ideal saint of the Middle Ages; and was yet so full of simple devotion, of loving tenderness for man and bird and beast, that his name still lives enshrined in all our hearts.

Delightful as would be the task, we cannot linger on the details of that wonderful history which is familiar to us all, and of which so many incidents are pictured in the frescoes round the walls of the lower church,

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which we can scarcely doubt were inspired by the poet's words.

We must return to the part which the exiled Florentine took in the stirring events by which his beloved Italy was torn asunder.

Out of the shadows in which Dante's life is enveloped during this period, there rings forth a clarion note in that famous letter which he wrote to the Italian cardinals assembled at Carpentras, near Avignon, in 1314, to appoint a successor to Pope Clement V.

"How doth the city sit desolate, who was filled with people! The mistress of the nations hath become a widow." Thus, like another Jeremiah, he laments the desolation of Rome, the Eternal City robbed of her ancient glory, deprived of her holy father. He takes his inspiration from "Him who looketh down from the lofty watch-tower of eternity," and appeals to the officers of the church militant, who have gone astray like the false driver Phaeton. "Ye have despised the fire sent down from heaven . . . ye have sold doves in the temple . . . Perchance ye will cry in indignant rebuke, 'And who is this?' . . . who raiseth himself up to the ark? . . .

"In truth I am one of the least of the sheep on the pastures . . . riches are not mine . . . but the zeal of His house hath eaten me up. . . .

"Even yet amends may come if ye all who were the authors of this going astray fight manfully and with one mind for the bride of Christ, for the seat of the bride, which is Rome, for our Italy, and for the whole estate of those on pilgrimage on earth . . . so should they hear a *Gloria in excelsis*." *

* *Epist. viii.*, trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

As we know, the efforts of Dante were in vain, since, after the papal throne had been vacant for two years and a half, the Cardinal of Porto, of evil reputation, was elected and took the name of John XXII., and remained at Avignon. Dante did not live to see Rome once more the seat of the papacy. After that epistle to the cardinals we have no distinct trace of his movements until some time later than June 14, 1314, when he appears to have been at Lucca. That was the date when the Ghibelline leader, Uguccone della Faggiuola, who had been made Imperial Vicar of Genoa, took possession of Lucca, which became a refuge for some of the wandering exiles from Florence. There are various allusions in the poet's writings to this fair city softly enticing, which is but little changed since his day, save that the ancient ramparts of masonry, which girdle it on all sides—once crowned with grim towers and flanked with massive rounded bastions—are now, in these piping days of peace, become a broad walk shaded with a double avenue of planes, trees whose like you will not find elsewhere.

From that point of vantage we look down upon the rich and lovely valley of the Serchio, a swift-running stream, glistening like brass between the raised banks where rustling reeds grow high above the dull red earth, and silvery olives quiver on the sunny slopes, and the mountains close in the view on every side save the east. There is nothing stern and rugged about them, at least in summer time, for they are clothed to the feet with pine woods and chestnut copses, and mulberry and ilex below, where the ground is hidden with broom and heath. We see Monte San Giuliano, of which Dante speaks.

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"al monte
per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno."*

("That mountain which hides Lucca from the
Pisans.")

As we pass down into the ancient town we find no arcades like Bologna, but narrow streets of stern houses with grated windows, which seem to be keeping close and suspicious watch on their neighbours opposite. The "magnificent people and commune of Lucca" must have been more busy and prosperous in the days of Dante than it is at present, for we hear that it was famous for its beautiful silks and brocades, and kept three thousand silk-weavers at work. We may well wonder how the peaceful arts could flourish in those stormy times, till we remember that the Duomo of Florence was built chiefly by the Wool-merchants' Guild of that city.

Of the mediæval churches within whose sacred walls the great exile may have worshipped, the first to strike us is San Michele, whose great sculptured image of the archangel, with brazen wings outspread, rises high above the ornate façade, and commands the place. Then we have the ancient Lombard church dedicated to San Frediano, who was an Irishman, and became Bishop of Lucca in the middle of the sixth century. It has a great façade of marble, and Byzantine mosaics gleaming forth on the little piazza below. But most sumptuous of all is the Duomo of San Martino, containing the Santo Volto, to which Dante

* *Inf.* xxxiii. 29.



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S. FREDIANO FROM THE RAMPARTS, LUCCA

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

makes special reference : "Qui non ha loco il Santo Volto." *

This "Holy Face" of Lucca is a relic treasured as of the highest sanctity. It is a figure of our Lord on the cross, which the legend says was carved by Nicodemus, who, while seeking in vain to picture to himself the divine face, fell asleep, and his work was finished by an angel. It was miraculously brought from the Holy Land to Lucca, and has always been so renowned that William Rufus used to swear by it. On the great crucifix is a figure with a seamless coat, and many pilgrims go to worship at the shrine on the feast of Santa Croce, September 14.

The façade of the Duomo has a deep portico with tier above tier of sculptured arcades rising above it, where St. Martin rides on high, sharing his cloak with a beggar. The interior has a curious roof with clerestory of beautiful tracery. The old iron cresset which is hanging from the vaulted roof is filled with burning flax, and as the little flame fades away, we hear the voices of the choir singing "Sic transit gloria mundi." Here, too, of later days, is the exquisite monument of Ilaria del Carretto, beautiful in her peaceful slumber.

Dante alludes to several citizens of Lucca ; one of whom, Allessio Intermini, of the Bianchi faction, he places with the flatterers in Malebolge. Another, a certain Bonagiunta Orbicciani degli Overardi, was a notary and poet, and is mentioned in documents of 1296 in connection with the works of San Michele. He is met with in the *Purgatorio*.

* *Inf.* xxi. 48.

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" 'Questi' (e mostrò col dito), 'è Bonagiunta,
Bonagiunta da Lucca. . . '

Ma, come fa chi guarda e poi s'apprezza
più d'un che d'altro, fe' io a quel da Lucca,
che più pareva di me aver contezza.

Ei mormorava, e non so che 'Gentucca'
sentiva io là ov' ei sentia la piaga
della giustizia che sì li pilucca.

'O anima,' diss' io, 'che par sì vaga
di parlar meco, fa sì ch' io t' intenda,
e te e me col tuo parlare appaga.'

'Femmina è nata, e non porta ancor benda,
cominciò ei, 'che ti farà piacere
la mia città, come ch' uom la riprenda.

Tu te n'andrai con questo antivedere. . . ' " *

(" 'This, and he pointed his finger, is Bonagiunta,
Bonagiunta of Lucca. . . ' I was as one who looks
amongst a crowd, and singles out one; so did I him
of Lucca, who seemed to have some knowledge of
me. He was murmuring, and I heard something
like 'Gentucca.' . . . 'O spirit,' I said, 'that
seemeth desiring to talk with me, speak so that
I may understand thee, and satisfy me with thy
words.' 'A woman is born but wears not yet
the wimple,' he began, 'who will make my city
dear to thee, whoever may blame it. Thou shalt
go hence with this prophecy. . . .')

At the ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*, 1300,
Gentucca is described as being quite a young girl,

* *Purg.* xxiv. 19.

RUINED HOPES AND WANDERINGS

unmarried, and therefore not wearing the "benda" of a wife. She is supposed to have been Madonna Gentucca Morla, whose husband, Cosciorino Fondora of Lucca, mentions her with high respect in his will, dated December 15, 1317. When Dante was at Lucca, he was a man of mature age, almost fifty; a grave and sedate person, who might enjoy his friendship with a lady of congenial tastes, without a shadow of blame. Francesco da Buti says: "He formed an attachment to a gentle lady called Madonna Gentucca . . . on account of her great virtue and modesty, and not from any other love." Even Scartazzini, critical and almost sardonic as he often is, lays great stress on the bond between them being that "of affection, not love—a feeling platonic, pure and holy."

It is thought quite possible that Dante's two sons, Pietro and Jacopo, may have joined their father during his stay in Lucca, for they were included in the next edict which was published by Florence against the exiles.

One more memory of the city remains to be mentioned: that of Santa Zita, a young maidservant—"la Paméla de la légende"—who died in 1275, when Dante was a boy and probably heard of her fame. He mentions her to represent her native city, speaking of a magistrate of Lucca as "un degli anzian' di Santa Zita"—the "Anziani" being equivalent to the Priori of Florence. This lowly maiden became the patron saint of Lucca, having been canonised by Pope Nicholas II., and her tomb in the ancient basilica of San Frediano is the object of many a pilgrimage. Just

* *Inf.* xxi. 38.

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outside her chapel is a splendid specimen of an ancient font for immersion.

Dante had no very high opinion of the people of Lucca, for in the *Inferno* of the barrators or barterers (those who made vile traffic of public offices for money), he remarks ironically that at Lucca "all are barrators except Bonturo," he being in fact the worst of all.

"quella terra ch' i' n' ho ben fornita :
ognun v' è barattier, fuor che Bonturo ;
del no per li denar vi si fa ita." *

("That city which I have provided well with
them : every one there is a barrator, except Bonturo ;
there they make ' Ay ' of ' No ' for money.")

In this attempt to follow the wanderings of Dante, we cannot dwell upon the history of Italy more than is absolutely necessary to explain the movements of the exile. In August 1315, the Lord of Lucca, Uguccione della Faggiuola set forth against Florence and besieged Montecatini in the Val di Nievole. The Florentines and their allies met him in full force, but through a fierce battle Uguccione won a great victory. After this, however, he appears to have been overbearing and tyrannical in his ruling of the cities, so that at length Lucca and Pisa both rose against him and his son, who was Podestà, and they were expelled from the lordship and "fell from that marvellous glory." Uguccione took refuge with the Malespina, those friendly nobles of the Lunigiana whom Dante extols so

* *Inf.* xxi. 40.



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OUTSIDE CHAPEL OF STA. ZITA, LUCCA

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highly, and it seems probable that he accompanied the great war-captain.

Florence had now a little leisure to make peace with Pisa, and to choose a new Podestà, the Count Guido of Battifolle ; we may also notice that Villani, the historian, was one of the Priori that year. An amnesty was offered to the Ghibelline exiles, on the following humiliating conditions. Each man was to pay a certain sum, to wear the shameful malefactor's cap on his head, and holding a wax taper in his hands, to follow the chariot of the Mint to the church of San Giovanni, and there make offerings in expiation. It was part of the ceremony that the culprit should go to a public prison, and then ask to be offered up as a redeemed prisoner.

Many of the exiles appear to have agreed to these terms, but Dante rejected them with scorn. He wrote thus to a Florentine friend (those words of the homeless exile which ring through the world with such proud and noble dignity) :

" . . . Is this the glorious recall whereby Dante Alighieri is summoned back to his fatherland after suffering well-nigh fifteen years of exile ? Is this the reward of innocence manifest to all the world, of unbroken sweat and toil in study ? Far be it from the familiar of philosophy, this abject abasement of a soul of clay ! . . . Not this the way of return to my country, O my father ! but if another may hereafter be found by you or any other, which hurts not Dante's fair fame and honour, that will I accept with no lagging feet. If no such path leads back to Florence, then will I never enter Florence more. What then ? May I not gaze upon the mirror of the sun and stars where-

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ever I may be ? Can I not ponder on the sweetest truths wherever I may be beneath the heaven, but I must first make me inglorious, nay infamous, before the people and the state of Florence ? Nor shall I lack for bread." * ("Quippe nec panis deficit.")

* *Epist.* ix. 3, 4, trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

CHAPTER XVII
WITH CAN GRANDE AT VERONA

**" Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
lo pane altrui, e com' è duro calle
lo scendere e il salir per l'altrui scale."**

Par. xvii. 58.

**(" Thou shalt prove how salt doth taste the bread
of others, and how hard a path the going up and
down another's stairs.")**

CHAPTER XVII

WITH CAN GRANDE AT VERONA

WHEN Dante turned his face once more towards Verona, his "primo rifugio e primo ostella," we have no certain knowledge, but it was probably about the beginning of 1316, soon after Uguccone had fallen "from his great glory." How he travelled on this occasion we have no means of tracing out; whether in the company of the great captain, who even in defeat would ride undaunted through the land, with followers and men-at-arms around him, or whether his was once more a lonely pilgrimage across the Apennines, there is no record. Uguccone, the expelled ruler of Lucca, appears to have wasted no time in lamenting the inevitable, but to have accepted an offer from Can Grande of Verona to be captain of his army.

Dante had long since made the acquaintance of this Can Grande della Scala, who was a boy of nine years old when the poet first found a shelter at Verona.

"Con lui vedrai colui che impresso fue
nascendo sì da questa stella forte,
che notabili fien l'opere sue.

Non se ne son le genti ancora accorte,
per la novella età; chè pur nove anni
son queste rote intorno di lui torte. . . .

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sua virtute
in non curar d'argento nè d'affanni.
Le sue magnificenze conosciute
saranno ancora, sì che i suoi nimici
non ne potran tener le lingue mute.
A lui t'aspetta ed ai suoi benefici ;
per lui fia trasmutata molta gente,
cambiando condizion, ricchi e mendici ;
E porteraine scritto nella mente
di lui, ma nol dirai ' : e disse cose
incredibili a quei che fien presente." *

("With him shalt thou see one who was so impressed by this mighty star at his birth, that his deeds shall be famous. The nations do not yet understand his worth, by reason of his youth, for only nine years have the spheres revolved around him. . . . his indifference to money and to toil. His greatness shall be so recognised hereafter, that concerning it his very foes shall not be able to keep silence. Wait thou for him and for his benevolence ; through him shall many a nation see changes ; the rich brought low, and the poor rising to honour. And this, too, shall be written in thy mind concerning him, but speak it not ' : and he told me things even beyond the belief of those who shall behold them."

It is Cacciaguida, the poet's crusading ancestor who tells him of that which shall befall him in the future ; and in those last words there is a very dramatic touch.

* *Par.* xvii. 76.

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Such strange and mighty things are whispered that even when they come to pass no one will be able to believe them! This is supposed to be spoken at the ideal date of the Vision, 1300, which would make the young prince to be twenty-three years old at the time of Dante's second visit.

History appears to justify the poet's high opinion of him. The young brother and successor of "il gran Lombardo" had grown into a very perfect warrior, "bold and prompt in battle and victorious exceedingly," as Benvenuto says. He was the chief captain of the Ghibellines, and had been made Imperial Vicar by the Emperor Henry, at whose crowning with the iron crown of Lombardy in Milan he was present. A faithful adherent of his lord, he was on the point of setting sail from Genoa to attend the Emperor's final coronation at Rome, in October 1311, when he received news of his brother Albuino's death, and was compelled to return at once to Verona, of which he was now sole lord.

Mussato tells one story of splendid promptness and gallantry on the part of this young hero, which is too characteristic to omit. On a certain night, early in September 1314, the Paduans, led by the Condottiere Vanni, were successful in a stealthy night attack upon Vicenza, which was under the rule of Verona. Having taken the city, they proceed to give it up to "fire, sword and plunder." But the avenger was at hand; for a swift messenger was despatched at once with tidings of the assault, and found the Lord of Verona at a great feast in honour of his nephew's wedding. Without a moment's delay, Can Grande started from the table, seized his arms, flung himself upon his horse, and rode

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off through the night to Vicenza, in such haste that only one follower could keep pace near him. It was long after midnight when the message came, but at dawn he entered the gate of the conquered city, and going to the dwelling of a kinsman, another charger was brought for him to mount. As he raised to his lips a stirrup cup of wine, he looked up to heaven and cried :

"O Mary, Mother of God, on whose blessed name I meditate twice in the week, fasting ; come thou from heaven and be with me, lead and guide me, O divine Mother, if my prayers are worthy ; and if not, then may this day be the last to shine upon mine eyes, provided only that thou have mercy upon my soul !"

Mussato tells us that the warrior's deeds that day makes it possible to believe all the ancient stories of the Maccabees scattering their thousands, and of Alexander casting himself alone into the city of the foe. "Let none doubt them, who looked upon the face of Can Grande as with a handful of followers he dashed upon five hundred foemen and put them to disgraceful flight."

Can we wonder that the heart of Dante was drawn to such mighty feats of valour, and that he should ask himself, in a moment of enthusiasm, if here might not be found the looked-for deliverer, the hope of Israel ? One thing at least we may believe, that the exile was received in the palace of the Scaligers with generous hospitality, and that his admiration and gratitude laid the foundation of a devoted friendship with his host. As testimony to this we have the epistle which he wrote to Can Grande when he dedicated to him the *Paradiso*. It is addressed :

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"Magnifico atque victorioso domino, domino Cani Grandi de Scala, sacratissimi Cæsarei principatus in urbe Verona et civitate Vicentia Vicario Generali . . ." and begins :

"The illustrious praise of your munificence, which vigilant fame scatters abroad as she flies, draws men in divers ways, so as to exalt some in the hope of prosperous success, and to cast down others in the terror of destruction. Now this renown, surpassing all deeds of modern men, I was once wont to think extravagant, as going beyond the warrant of truth ; but lest continued doubt should keep me too much in suspense, even as the queen of the south sought Jerusalem, or as Pallas sought Helicon, so did I seek Verona to scrutinise by the faithful testimony of my own eyes the things which I had heard. And there I beheld your splendours, I beheld and at the same time touched your bounty ; and whereas I had formerly suspected excess in what was said, so afterwards I knew that the facts themselves were greater.

"Wherefore it came to pass that as the mere report had already made me your well-wisher, with a certain submission of soul, from the first sight of the source itself, I became your most devoted servant and friend."

After some remarks on the nature of true friendship which is "in no sort hindered by disparity," the letter continues :

"Cherishing your friendship then as my dearest treasure, I desire to preserve it with loving forethought and continued care. . . . And I have found nothing

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more suited to your [pre-eminence than the sublime cantica of the *Comedy* which is adorned with the title of *Paradise*; which cantica . . . I inscribe, I offer, and conclusively commend to you." *

Then follows a very long analysis of his poem, an abstruse dissertation on philosophy and metaphysics: the most marvellous letter ever written to a prince, I should imagine. It cannot have been written until the *Paradiso* was completed, possibly about 1319, when Dante was at Ravenna, and it appears to be in itself very strong evidence that the friendship between the illustrious patron and the exiled poet remained unbroken to the end.

We must bear this in mind when we read the oft-told tale of the insults and humiliation which the austere scholar is said to have endured at the gay court of the young ruler. It is a very ancient story that "the life of him that dependeth on another man's table is not to be counted for a life. It is a miserable thing to go from house to house; for where thou art a stranger thou darest not open thy mouth . . . moreover thou shalt hear bitter words."† No doubt that Dante had much to endure from his fellow exiles, and it is quite possible that they agreed with Villani's estimate of his character as "somewhat arrogant, scornful and haughty." He was not likely to be popular with courtiers, actors and "parasites of every description." He makes a contemptuous allusion to Lapo Salterello, the Florentine lawyer, who was one of his companions here, and who

* Epist. x. Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

† Ecclesiasticus, xxix. 24, 25.

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is described by Benvenuto as "a litigious and loquacious man." But the reception given to all these various guests appears to have been in lordly style. We read from Arrivabene that :

"Can Grande gathered around him those distinguished personages whom unfortunate reverses had driven from their country ; but he also kept in his pay buffoons and musicians, and other merry persons, who were more caressed by the courtiers than the men famous for their deeds and learning. One of the guests was Sagacio Musio Gazzata, the historian of Reggio, who has left us an account of the treatment which the illustrious and unfortunate exiles received. Various apartments were assigned to them in the palace, designated by various symbols—a Triumph for the warriors ; Groves of the Muses for the poets ; Mercury for the artists ; Paradise for the preachers ; and for all, inconstant Fortune. Can Grande likewise received at his court his illustrious prisoners of war, Giacomo di Carrara, Vanne Scornazano, Albertino Mussato, and many others. All had their private attendants, and a table equally well served. At times Can Grande invited some of them to his own table, particularly Dante and Guido di Castel of Reggio, exiled from his country with the friends of liberty, and who from his simplicity was called 'the simple Lombard.' " *

Were ever exiles treated with more splendid hospitality, before or since ? We hope the picture is not too highly coloured. In the *Convito*, we find a curious remark with regard to the "courtesy" of courts : "Fu

* Quoted by Longfellow.

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tanto a dire *cortesia*, quanto uso di corte ; lo quel vocabolo se oggi si togliesse dalle corti, massimamente d'Italia, non sarebbe altro a dire che *turpezza*." * "That if courtesy is understood to mean the actual manners of the courts of Italy, it would mean all that was most foul and base." But the *Convito* was written before this visit to Verona.

This is the description of his personal appearance about this time, which Boccaccio gives : "When he had reached maturity, he went somewhat bowed, his gait grave and gentle . . . his complexion was dark, his hair and beard thick . . . and curling, and his expression melancholy and thoughtful. Hence it chanced one day in Verona (when the fame of his works had spread abroad everywhere, and especially that part of his Comedy which he entitles Hell ; and when he himself was known by sight to many, both men and women), that as he passed by a gateway where sat a group of women, one of them said to the others, softly, yet so that she was heard well enough by him and his company : 'Do you see that man who goes to Hell and comes again at his pleasure ; and brings tidings up here of them that be below ?' To the which one of the others answered in all good faith : 'In truth it must needs be as thou sayest. Seest thou not how his beard is crisped and his skin darkened by the heat and smoke that are below ?'" †

We find various allusions to Verona in Dante's works. He meets, in the Purgatorio, an ancient Abbot of San Zeno, who laments that he has such an unworthy successor.

* *Conv.* ii. 11.

† Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

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"Io fui Abate in San Zeno a Verona,
sotto lo imperio del buon Barbarossa,
di cui dolente ancor Milan ragiona.
E tale ha già l'un piè dentro la fossa,
che tosto piangerà quel monastero,
e tristo fia d'averne avuto possa ;
Perchè suo figlio, mal del corpo intero,
e della mente peggio, e che mal nacque,
ha posto in loco di suo pastor vero."*

("I was Abbot of San Zeno at Verona, under the rule of the good Barbarossa, of whom Milan yet sadly speaks. And I know one who has already one foot in the grave, who will soon mourn because of that monastery, and will regret that he had influence there ; because his son, utterly deformed in body and worse in mind, and who was born in shame, he has put here in place of its true shepherd.")

This half-brother, the Abbot, was very unlike Can Grande himself, who is described as being tall, handsome, and of soldierly aspect.

San Zeno is one of the wonderful old churches of Verona, with a magnificent portal sculptured with the story of the saint, and the Chase of Theodoric. It has a canopy supported by lions, and ancient bronze doors with a series of carvings in relief. The dim mysterious interior is most striking, with an upper raised church, reached by steps, as in the earliest basilicas ; and as we stand here by the throned marble figure of San Zeno and look back—each time the heavy door is

* *Purg.* xviii. 118.

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thrown open—we see the western sunlight stream through in a golden shaft, as the dark figures descend the steps into the misty depths of the nave.

The campanile is quite detached from the church and soars upward with a double gallery of Lombard arches, a spire, and turrets. In the grand old cloister is the tomb of the Abbot Guiseppe della Scala, spoken of above.

Verona indeed is full of memorials of the Scaligers ; everywhere we see their coat-of-arms—the golden ladder surmounted by the black Imperial Eagle—"we look out from Can Grande's palace window to his tomb." Suddenly in the midst of the busy town we come upon a quiet little graveyard by the church of Santa Maria Antica, the court chapel of the Scaligers, which contains their tombs. Ruskin thus describes that of Can Grande :

"This consummate form of Gothic tomb is set over the portal of the chapel. The sarcophagus is sculptured with shallow bas-reliefs, representing the principal achievements of the warrior's life, especially the siege of Vicenza and battle of Placenza ; these sculptures, however, form little more than a chased and roughened groundwork for the fully relieved statues representing the Annunciation, projecting boldly from the front of the sarcophagus.

"Above, the Lord of Verona is laid in his long robe of civic dignity, wearing the simple bonnet, consisting merely of a fillet bound round the brow, knotted and falling on the shoulder. He is laid as asleep ; his arms crossed upon his body, and his sword by his side. Above him, a bold arched canopy is sustained by two projecting shafts, and on the pinnacle of its



Alinari

TOMB OF CAN GRANDE I., VERONA

1

2

3

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roof is the statue of the knight on his war-horse ; his helmet, dragon-winged and crested with the dog's head, tossed back behind his shoulders, and the broad and blazoned drapery floating back from his horse's breast—so truly drawn by the old workman from the life, that it seems to wave in the wind, and the knight's spear to shake, and his marble horse to be evermore quickening its pace, and starting into heavier and hastier charge as the silver clouds float past behind it in the sky." * That is how we would remember the gallant young warrior, as he rode into Vicenza on that eventful morn ; while the carved figure of the Madonna recalls to us his passionate vow to " Mary, divine Mother ! "

Dante makes a curious reference to the foot-race known as the Pallio at Verona, which was run on the first Sunday in Lent, and for which the prize was a piece of green cloth. He compares the grave and learned Brunetto Latini to one of the runners.

" Poi si rivolse, e parve di coloro
che coronno a Verona il drappo verde
per la campagna ; e parve di costoro
Quegli che vince e non colui che perde." †

(" Then he [Brunetto] turned back, and seemed like one of those who run for the green cloth at Verona through the open field ; and he seemed to be one of those who gains, not he who loses.")

When we picture to ourselves the baked and

* S. V. III., ii. 53.

† *Inf.* xv. 121.

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withered figure of the distinguished professor coming in as a winner in that race of athletes, we understand the weird humour of the chronicles of the Trojans.

It has been suggested that Dante may have taken the idea of the internal architecture of the Inferno from the ancient Roman amphitheatre here, which is still so perfect, with its unbroken rows of seats, the corridors and staircases and "subterranean passages for beasts, as when the fierce thousands hurried in and out, intent on the bloody shows of the Arena."

Ampère remarks that this may have given the poet "le type de son enfer tel qu'on peut le voir représenté en tête de presque toutes les éditions Italiennes. Ce grand entonnoir, dont l'intérieur est borde par des gradins concentriques, séjour des différentes classes de damnés, offre une frappante ressemblance avec le célèbre amphithéâtre de Vérone. Si Dante l'a contemplé comme moi du sommet, par un beau clair de lune qui dessinait avec netteté les formes du monument, tandis que la dégradation insensible de la lumière semblait en creuser les profondeurs, il est très possible que ce spectacle l'ait aidé à tracer la configuration intérieure de *l'Enfer*."

Verona is so mediæval in appearance that we can picture to ourselves the bygone days when Dante paced those sombre streets, with their pointed arcades and trefoil windows, their pillared houses and carved balconies—which carry you back to past romance, to the feuds and loves of "the Montagues and Capulets."* The Duomo, with its quaint porch, whose

* *Purg.* vi. 106.

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columns are supported by griffons, while the paladins, Roland and Oliver, guard the portal where, through the shadowed opening, we dimly discern the vague and misty forms of the solemn interior. Beautiful Sant' Anastasia, with its rich and delicate marbles, and the church of San Fermo Maggiore, built of geranium-coloured brick with layers of marble, on the other side of the bridge, within whose walls we find monuments to some of the family of Dante. On one we read: "To Peter Alighieri Dante III., learned in Latin and Greek, incomparable husband. . . ." On the other: "To Louis Alighieri Dante IV., a jurisconsult, adorned with every virtue. . . ." It gives the impression of a dynasty!

In the church of Sant' Elena, close to the Baptistery of the Duomo, we have a clear memorial of Dante from his own words. It was here that he is said to have delivered his lecture "*De Aquâ et Terrâ*," on Sunday, January 20, 1320, in favour of the theory that the surface of the earth is everywhere higher than that of the water.

"This philosophic question was determined under the rule of the unconquered lord, Lord Can Grande della Scala, representing the sacred Roman Empire, by me, Dante Alighieri, least of philosophers, in the illustrious city of Verona, in the sanctuary of the glorious Helena, in the presence of all the clergy of Verona. . . ." *

Like much else in the story of Dante, it has been a subject of dispute whether he really wrote this curious dissertation on physical geography. If he was at

* Trans. by P. H. Wicksteed.

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Verona in 1320, it must have been on a passing visit, for before this time, possibly weary of the gay and noisy Court life, he had accepted an invitation to Ravenna from Guido Novello da Polenta.

It was probably during his stay at Verona that the poet visited Vicenza, to which he makes several allusions. As usual his mind turns at once to the river connected with a place :

“Ma tosta fia che Padova al palude
cangerà l'acqua che Vicenza bagna,
per esser al dover le genti crude.”*

(“But soon it shall come to pass that Padua shall change the river [the Bacchiglione] which bathes Vicenza into a swamp, because the people are stubborn against their duty.”)

One explanation of these lines is that, when at war with Padua, the men of Vicenza had a way of damming up the Bacchiglione, which stopped the water-mills in Padua and put the citizens to much inconvenience. But at the same time it turned the low-lying ground between the Euganean hills and Monte Berici, south of Vicenza, into a great swamp.

In the *Inferno* we find placed an old acquaintance of Dante's, Andrea de Mozzi, Bishop of Florence until 1295, when he was translated to Vicenza. Brunetto Latini is thus made to describe him :

“anco vedervi,
s'avessi avuco di tal tigna brama,

* *Par.* ix. 46.

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Colui potei che dal servo de' servi
fu trasmutato d'Arno in Bacchiglione,
dove lasciò li mal protesi nervi." *

("Also if thou hast any desire for such blemish, thou mightest have seen him there, who by the Servant of servants was translated from the Arno to the Bacchiglione, where he left his ill-strained nerves.")

This Andrea dei Mozzi was one of a noble and wealthy family, who were of the Bianchi party, and it was during his episcopate that the hospital of Santa Maria and the church of Santa Croce were begun. Yet he appears to have been a man of such evil life that Dante has not a good word to say for him. Curious stories are told by Benvenuto about his preaching. Thus he would demonstrate the great power of God by first showing a grain of mustard-seed, and then taking out an immense turnip from under his cloak; and he was also known to compare divine Providence to a mouse sitting on a beam—a strange combination of irreverence and simplicity.

On our way from Verona to Vicenza we pass the castles of the Montecchi (Montagues), who were very powerful in Verona, and were leaders of the Ghibellines. Their name, and that of the Cappelletti, their rivals, are mentioned in the *Purgatorio*. Vicenza is finely placed, and is beautiful in itself, with the swift Bacchiglione flowing through it, spanned by many bridges. It is a very ancient city, and has some

* *Inf.* xv. 110.

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Roman remains ; but the richly adorned palaces of Palladio were all built since the days of Dante, and with them we have no concern.

There is a noble tower just outside the Porta del Castello, which was built by the Scaligers as a landmark and watch-tower between the states of Lombardy and Venice. It is now used as the campanile to the church of SS. Felice e Fortunato. The Duomo is of thirteenth-century Gothic, with an imposing nave of one aisle, with side chapels, and a great red marble staircase to the choir. In the crypt is an ancient Lombard font for baptism by immersion.

But the chief interest of Vicenza lies in its stormy past, when Guelf and Ghibelline fought for the mastery, when, like another Maccabeus, Can Grande rode triumphant through its gate, and freed it from the yoke of Padua.

CHAPTER XVIII
RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

“L'ultimo rifugio.”

(“The last refuge.”)

**“Su la marina dove il Po discende
per aver pace co' seguaci sui.”**

**(“On the shore where the Po descends, seeking
peace with his retinue [of streams].”)**

CHAPTER XVIII

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

BOCCACCIO tells us that "In those times was Lord of Ravenna a noble cavalier whose name was Guido Novello da Polenta (made Podestà in 1316); he was well skilled in the liberal arts, and held men of worth in highest honour, especially such as excelled others in knowledge. And when it came to his ears that Dante, beyond all expectation, was now in Romagna, and in such desperate plight, he, who had long time before known his worth by fame, resolved to receive him and do him honour. Nor did he wait to be requested by him to do this, but considering with how great shame men of worth ask such favours, with liberal mind and with free proffers he approached him, requesting from Dante of special grace that which he knew Dante must needs have begged of him, to wit, that it might please him to abide with him. The two wills, therefore, of him who received and of him who made the request, thus uniting on one same end, Dante, being highly pleased by the liberality of the noble cavalier, and on the other side constrained by his necessities, awaited no further invitation but the first, and took his way to Ravenna, where he was honourably received by the lord thereof, who revived his

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fallen hope by kindly fosterings; and giving him abundantly such things as were fitting, he kept him there for many (?) years, yea, even to the last year of his life."

This Guido Novello was one of the Polentani family, who had been lords of Ravenna since 1270, usually under the republican name of Podestà. His grandfather, Guido Vecchio—the father of Francesco da Rimini, whose pathetic story Dante tells in the *Inferno*—had only died a few years before, and the younger Guido succeeded his uncle Lamberto. He was a man of cultured tastes, and invited scholars and poets to Ravenna, where there was a famous "Studio," which we should call the university. There is every reason to believe that Dante lectured here and had regular classes in vernacular rhetoric, and that possibly as a glorified text-book for his scholars he wrote his treatise in Latin prose, "De Vulgaro Eloquentia."

Boccaccio tells us that "he trained many scholars in poetry, especially in the vernacular"; and in the delightful poetical correspondence with del Virgilio, the "goats," which those pastoral shepherds are tending, are supposed to be the students.

"Frongentes ripas tondebant sponte juvenci,
mollia carpebant agnæ, dumosa capellæ."

("The kine were shearing at their ease the grassy banks, the lambs cropping the soft, the goats the brambly spots.")

The old commentator explained the oxen, the

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

lambs and goats to mean three orders or ages of scholars ! *

The whole of this pastoral play of words in which two grave and learned professors disport themselves—in Virgilian poetry—gives a very bright and interesting side-view on Dante's life in Ravenna. It is pleasant to think that amid all the sorrows and disappointment of exile, the poet had still buoyancy of spirit to enjoy so playful a correspondence. This is the story, briefly told.

Giovanni del Virgilio, apparently so called from his devotion to Virgil, was Professor of Poetry at the Studium of Bologna, and was a friend and admirer of Dante, but deeply regretted his perverse habit of writing in Italian. He begins his first letter by trying to persuade his fellow professor to return to the good old way and write forthwith some Latin poems, say on the history of his times. If he will only do so, Giovanni has every hope that Dante might achieve the honour of being crowned with ivy and laurel before the admiring eyes of Bologna.

To this appeal Dante answers with a Latin poem—the first Eclogue—in which, with charming lightness of touch and a delicate sense of humour, he declines the offer of the laurel crown at Bologna ; the Guelf city would not be safe for him. If ever he is to wear the poet's crown, it shall be when his great work is finished, and from his own Florence.

“ ‘But let me shun
The glades and pastures that know not the gods !

* Wicksteed and Gardner.

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Were it not better my triumphant locks
Should hide beneath the green their hoariness,
Erst auburn-glowing, by the ancestral stream,
Should ever I return to deck me there,
Of Arno. . . .'
'How to our side shall Mopsus then be won?'
'A ewe is mine. . . . Of her own will she comes,
And never driven to the milking pail.
Her do I purpose with deft hand to milk.
From her ten measures will I fill to send
To Mopsus. And do thou give heed, the while,
To the wanton goats; and learn thy teeth to fix
In stubborn crusts.'

Such words beneath the oak
Did I and Melibœus sing; what time
Our humble cot prepared our oaten meal."*

Dante takes the pastoral name of Tityrus; his friend and assistant, Ser Dino Perini, is Melibœus; and del Virgilio is Mopsus; Guido Novello is the urbane Iolus; and Ravenna "the dewy pastures of Pelorus." The ten measures are supposed to mean ten cantos of the *Paradiso*. We are at once reminded of these words in the *Divina Commedia*:

"Se mai continga che il poema sacro
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
sì che m' ha fatto per più anni macro,
Vinca la crudeltà, che fuor mi serra
del bello ovil, dov' io dormii agnello
nimico ai lupi, che gli danno guerra;

* Eclogue I. trans. P. Wicksteed.

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

Con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
del mio battesimo prenderò il cappello ;
Però che nella Fede, che fa conte
l'anime a Dio, quivi entr' io, e poi
Pietro per lei sì mi girò la fronte." *

("Should it ever happen that the sacred poem—to which both heaven and earth have set their hand, so that it has made me lean through many a year—overcomes the cruelty which bars me forth from the fair sheepfold where as a lamb I slept, foe to the wolves which war upon it; now with a changed voice and a changed fleece shall I return a poet, and at the font of my baptism will I take the chaplet; because there I entered into the Faith which makes known all souls to God; and for her sake, Peter then encircled my brow.")

Here we touch upon the central hope and longing of the poet's heart, but it was not to be; "wherefore he so died, without the much desired honour."

It appears to have been Dino Perini who had the privilege of bearing Dante's letter to Bologna, and he brought back the reply of del Virgilio, who was charmed with the pastoral humour of his friend. He writes a poetical epistle in the same strain, comparing the Florentine poet to another Virgil, and pressing him once more to visit Bologna.

"No pleasure shall be lacking. Hither come! Hither shall come Parrhasian swains, both old and young,

* *Par.* xxv. 1.

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who long to see thee ; and hither all who be fain to hear new songs to marvel at and to be taught the old . . . Come hither and fear not our groves, O Tityrus ! . . . ”*

There is a tradition that del Virgilio did not receive an answer to this in Dante's lifetime, but that the poem known as the second Eclogue was brought to him by the poet's son, when the hand which had written it was cold in death. This thought recalls the melancholy note which strikes us as we approach Ravenna : “ Une contrée déserte, des plaines vastes et solitaires, un ciel morne, une lumière sinistre, à ma droite les longues lignes de la Pineta, à ma gauche le soleil à demi perdu dans des nuages noirs, d'où s'échappait une flamme rougeâtre, m'annonçaient la sépulture de Dante.

“ Dante a bien fait de mourir à Ravenne ; son tombeau est bien placé dans cette triste cité, tombeau de l'empire romain en Occident, empire qui, né dans un marais, est venu expirer dans des lagunes.” †

At Ravenna, indeed, everything reminds us of the end of that great Roman empire which the author of the “*De Monarchia*” loved so well. Wandering through the silent grass-grown streets, we pass the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the daughter of Theodosius the Great, who rests in a splendid sarcophagus between her brother Honorius and her husband Constantius III. It was early in the fifth century that the Gothic kings first took up their abode at Ravenna, where, as the sea retreated, the shallowness of the water was a barrier against the ships of the enemy, and “the port of Augustus was converted into pleasant orchards, while a lonely grove of pines covered the ground where the

* *Carmen III.* trans. Wicksteed.

† Ampère.

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

Roman fleet once rode at anchor. In the twentieth year of his age, the emperor of the west (Honorius), anxious only for his personal safety, retired to the perpetual confinement of the walls and morasses." * Outside these walls we look upon the great mausoleum of Theodoric, the gallant king of the Goths, who, not a hundred years later than the coming of Honorius, made Ravenna the capital of his kingdom. His monument, built by his daughter, who rejoiced in the name of Amalasontha, Queen of Italy, has been compared to a Scandinavian tumulus thrown upon a Roman *cella*. We have no space to dwell upon his reign, that golden age for Italy, but must pass on to the memorials of Justinian, in those marvellous mosaics of San Vitale, the Byzantine temple of exquisite and unrivalled magnificence. Here in the tribune we see the emperor surrounded by courtiers, soldiers and priests, offering a consecrated vase ; and we wonder if the thoughts of Dante, as he once stood before that triumphant figure, turned with bitter memory to a lonely grave at Pisa.

In the *Paradiso* he makes Justinian tell the story of the Roman empire, and point out that the true significance of imperial rule lies in cultivating the arts of peace. This is the introduction :

"Poscia che Costantin l'aquila volse
contra il corso del ciel, ch' ella seguio
dietro all' antico, che Lavina tolse,
Cento e cent' anni e più l'uccel di Dio
nell' estremo d'Europa si ritenne,
vicino ai monti de' quai prima uscio ;

* Gibbon, iii. 361.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

E sotto l'ombra delle sacre penne
governò il mondo lì di mano in mano,
e sì cangiando in su la mia pervenne.
Cesare fui, e son Giustiniano,
che, per voler del primo amor ch' io sento,
d'entro le leggi trassi il troppo e il vano. . . ."

("After Constantine had turned back the eagle against the course of heaven, which it had followed in train of the ancient one [Æneas] who took Lavinia. Two hundred years and more the bird of God abode on the limit of Europe, near to the mountains from whence he had first issued; and there he governed the world under the shadow of his sacred wings, from hand to hand, until by successive change he came to mine. Cæsar I was, and am Justinian, who, by will of the Primal Love which I now feel, took from the laws the useless and redundant. . . .")

He continues his tale throughout the whole of the sixth canto. He thus alludes to Ravenna :

"Quel che fe' poi ch' egli uscì di Ravenna,
e saltò Rubicon, fu di tal volo
che nol seguiteria lingua nè penna." †

("What it achieved when he [Cæsar] left Ravenna and leaped the Rubicon, was such a flight that neither tongue nor pen could follow it.")

Dante thus mentions the family of his noble friend and patron :

* *Par.* vi. 1. † *Par.* vi. 61.

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

"Ravenna sta, come stata e molti anni:

l'aquila da Polenta la si cova,

sì che Cervia ricopre co' suoi vanni." *

("Ravenna stands, as it has stood for many years:
the Eagle of Polenta broods over it, so that he covers
Cervia with his pinions.")

Cervia is a little town of old Romagna, on the Adriatic, about twelve miles south of Ravenna. In mediæval days it grew rich and prosperous on a salt monopoly; from the rule of the Polenta lords it passed later to that of the Malatesta of Rimini. Dante mentions the late Archbishop of Ravenna, Bonifazio dei Fieschi, by a curious little touch of accurate observation, the peculiar shape of his pastoral staff, which bore at the top a small shrine (*rocco*) instead of a crook.

"E Bonifazio

che pasturò col rocco molte genti." †

("Boniface who pastured many people with the
'rocco.'")

The "many people" refers to the vast extent of his diocese.

The successor of this Bonifazio was one of Dante's many friends in the city, Rainaldo Concoreggia, who is reputed to have studied at Bologna with the poet, and of whom there is a tradition that he was offered the post of Teacher of Law at Lodi, with a salary of

* *Inf.* xxvii. 40.

† *Purg.* xxiv. 29.

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
esser baciata da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante :
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse ;
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.'
Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
l'altro piangeva sì che di pietade
io venni men così com' io morisse ;
E caddi, come corpo morto cade." *

(" ' Love, which is quickly learned by gentle heart, entangled him with that fair form of which I was so bereft, that it still afflicts me. Love, which takes denial from none beloved, filled me so strongly with delight in him that, as thou seest, it leaves me not even now. Love led us to one death ; Caina waits for him who quenched our life.' Such were their words. . . . then I turned to them again, and I spoke, beginning : ' Francesca, thy torments make me weep with grief and pity. But tell me : in the time of your sweet sighs, by what and how love granted that you knew your yet uncertain wishes ? ' She replied : ' There is no greater pain than to remember happy days, in misery ; and this thy teacher knows. But if thou hast such desire to know the first beginning of our love, I will do as one who weeps and speaks.

" ' One day, for pastime, we read of Lancelot, how love constrained him ; we were alone, and with no misgivings. More than once that reading caused our eyes to meet, and our faces grew pale ; but it

* *Inf.* v. 99.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

orty imperial livres a year. The beloved archbishop died a few weeks before Dante and his tomb is in the Duomo. Of another friend, Fiduccio dei Milotti, philosopher and physician, we are told that he was sometimes a companion of the poet's walks in the Pineta, and advised him not to go to Bologna for the crown of poesy.

In these last years of his life, Dante not only had the company of his two sons, Pietro and Jacopo, but also that of his daughter Beatrice. It must have been a strange pathetic meeting between the young girl and her father, from whom she had been parted most of her life, and of whom she can scarcely have had the slightest remembrance. We should like to pierce the shadows of the past and learn more about her. After the poet's death she appears to have become a nun, for when Florence awoke to some tardy recognition, and awarded her ten gold florins, we find this entry in an ancient document dated in September 1350 :

"A. M. Giov. di Bocchaccio fiorini dicci d'oro perche gli desse a Suora Beatrice, figliuola di Dante Alighieri, Monaca nel Monasterio di S. Stefano dell' Uliva di Ravenna." *

Another document shows that Pietro Alighieri held two benefices in Ravenna, for which he had neglected to pay the "procurations" due to the legate of Pope John XXII., Cardinal Bertrando del Poggetto. The names of these were Santa Maria di Zenzanigola and San Simone di Muro, which was given to him by the wife of Guido Novello, the Contessa Caterina. This lady does not appear to have shown any indignation

* Ricci, "Ultimo Rifugio."

RAVENNA, THE LAST REFUGE

at Dante's slighting remark about her relations : " Ben fa Bagnacaval, che non rifiglia." *

Bagnacavallo was a stronghold near Ravenna from whence the Counts of Bagnacavallo took their title, and the poet's exclamation was one of satisfaction that " they bore no more sons."

In the city over which hovered the eagle of Polenta, it might have seemed more appropriate to pray that no more daughters be born to that princely house, when we remember the pitiful story of Francesca da Polenta, the daughter of Guido Vecchio, and the sister of Guido Novello's father. She is truly Francesca of Ravenna, where she was born and spent her happy youth, rather than of Rimini, which saw her fall and her tragic death. With one quick touch of intuitive accuracy the situation of her native town is described :

" Siede la terra, dove nata fui,
su la marina dove il Po discende
per aver pace co' seguaci sui." †

(" The place where I was born is situate on the shore where Po descends to rest, with his retinue [of streams].")

And a princely following it is of attendant 'tributaries, hurrying from lake and mountain to swell his course !

The story of Francesca must be told in Dante's own words, so full alike of stern dramatic force, and haunt-

* *Purg.* xiv. 115.

† *Inf.* v. 97.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

ing tenderness. In the Second Circle of the Inferno, amid those who counted both worlds well lost for love, the poet sees from afar two spirits that go lightly together, and being entreated by "the love which leads them," they come to him, as doves to their nest. Francesca speaks :

" ' Amor che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,
prese costui della bella persona
che mi fu tolta, e il modo ancor m'offende.
Amor, che a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.
Amor condusse noi ad una morte ;
Caina attende chi vita ci spense. . . '

Poi mi rivolsi a loro, e parlai io,
e cominciai : ' Francesca, i tuoi martiri
a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.
Ma dimmi : al tempo de' dolci sospiri,
a che e come concedette amore,
che conosceste i dubbiosi desiri ? '

Ed ella a me : ' Nessun maggior dolore,
che ricordarsi del tempo felice
nella miseria : e ciò sa il tuo dottore.
Ma se a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor to hai cotanto affetto,
farò come colui che piange e dice.

" ' Noi leggevano un giorno per diletto
di Lancilotto, come amor lo strinse ;
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.
Per più fiate gli occhi ci sospinse
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso ;
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.



P. Poppi, Vista d'Argentario, Bologna

PINETA DA RAVENNA

“ In the solitude
Of the pine forest and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood.”

(“ So Dante departed to Romagna, where his
last day, that was to put an end to all his toils,
awaited him.”)

BOCCACCIO.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PILGRIM'S GOAL

“Vago già di cercar dentro e dintorno
la divina foresta spessa e viva,
ch' agli occhi temperava il nuovo giorno,
Senza più aspettar lasciai la riva,
prendendo la campagna lento lento
su per lo suol che d'ogni parte oliva.
Un' aura dolce, senza mutamento
avere in sè, mi feria per la fronte
non di più colpo che soave vento,
Per cui le fronde, tremolando pronte,
tutte e quante piegavano alla parte
u' la prim' ombra gitta il santo monte ;
Non però dal lor esser dritto sparte
tanto, che gli augellatti per le cime
lasciasser d'operare ogni lor arte ;
Ma con piena letizia l'ôre prime,
cantando, ricevièno intra le foglie,
che tenevan bordone alle sue rime :
Tal qual di ramo in ramo si raccoglie
per la pineta io sul lito di Chiassi,
quand' Eolo Scirocco fuor discioglie.” *

* *Purg.* xxviii. 1.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

("Longing already to search in and round The heavenly forest, dense and living green, Which to the eyes tempered the new-born day.

Withouten more delay I left the bank, Crossing the level country slowly slowly, Over the soil, that everywhere breathed fragrance.

A gentle-breathing air, that no mutation Had in itself, smote me upon the forehead, No heavier blow, than of a pleasant breeze.

Whereat the tremulous branches readily Did all of them bow downward toward that side Where its first shadow casts the Holy Mountain ;

Yet not from their upright direction bent So that the little birds upon their tops Should cease the practice of their tuneful art ;

But with full-throated joy, the hours of prime Singing received they in the midst of foliage That made monotonous burden to their rhymes,

Even as from branch to branch it gathering swells, Through the pine forests on the shore of Chiassi, When Æolus unlooses the Sirocco." *)

WHAT a delicious feeling of peace and rest breathes through the whole of this exquisite description ! We seem to hear the murmuring pine-trees overhead, with that unceasing moan of the wind, like the far-off rising and swelling of the sea, as the wind-waves roll and break. Save this, silence reigns in the shadowy glades ; the stillness of the years sleeping in those dim immemorial trees, where the eye is baffled as it tries to pierce the maze. For as we tread the crisp carpet of moss and pine-needles, with the tangled undergrowth

* Longfellow's translation.



P. Poppe, Via d'Adriatico, Bologna

PINETA DA RAVENNA

DANTE THE WAYFARER

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* Longfellow's translation.



P. Dappi, Via d'Isoglio, Bologna

PINETA DA RAVENNA

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seeing if he erred in the Faith of Christ. And one morning Dante was in a church to see our Lord at the Mass, and this Inquisitor came to this church, and Dante was pointed out to him, so that the Inquisitor had him called; and Dante reverently went to him. Then the Inquisitor said to him: 'Art thou that Dante who sayest thou hast been in Hell, in Purgatory, and in Paradise?' And Dante answered: 'I am Dante Alighieri of Florence.' The Inquisitor angrily said: 'Thou goest making odes and sonnets and trash; thou wouldest have done much better to write a book (or grammar) in Latin, founding thyself upon the Holy Church of God, and not attend to such rubbish as this that could one day give thee what thou dost deserve.' . . . * They met again later, and Dante appears to have satisfied him with regard to his orthodoxy.

The spirit of him who dared to scale the delectable mountains of Paradise, seems to be most with us as we pass into the solemn stillness of those magnificent basilicas of Ravenna, where his vision rises up before us on every side. In a side chapel of San Giovanni Evangelista, his friend Giotto painted the saintly company of the evangelists with their symbols, and the Latin Fathers of the Church in stately order, St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine and St. Jerome. Over the pointed doorway of this church an exquisite bas-relief tells a legend of the foundress, Galla Placidia. Frescoes of Giotto are said to have once covered the interior of that curious church of Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, which was once by the sea-shore, but is now in the midst of a green campagna.

* Quoted by Wicksteed.



Alinari

MOSAICS IN S. APOLLINARE, RAVENNA

THE PILGRIM'S GOAL

The campanile rises from the base of the ancient Roman lighthouse of the port, which is now far inland, about two miles from the city.

Still farther away, out amongst the rice-fields and the marshes, lies the very perfect basilica of San Apollinare in Classe, with its tall circular campanile of geranium-coloured brick. But it is perhaps in the other church of the same name, San Apollinare Nuovo, so called in the fifth century, within the walls, that we can best trace a source of inspiration. Surely in the marvellous procession of splendid magi and white-robed virgins, bearing offerings to the Virgin and Child, we see the faint presentment of that great company of the redeemed, moving in rhythmic circles through the mystic central Rose of Paradise. Then Beatrice cried :

“Mira

quanto è il convento delle bianche stole !” *

(“Behold how great the white-robed company !”)

The time was drawing near when he too, who told the story of Paradise, would join that “*milizia santa*,” and his long exile and many troubles be no more remembered.

In the spring of 1321 there appears to have been a quarrel amongst some sailors which led to a serious dispute between Ravenna and Venice. This was represented by the Doge of Venice to have been “an excess committed against us by Guido da Polenta, by the Commune and men of Ravenna, in taking our

* *Par.* xxx. 128.

DANTE THE WAYFARER

ships, slaying our captain and his company, and wounding others of our men without any just cause, and while we were in peace and concord with them." This was a serious accusation, and matters grew worse when the Doge, Giovanni Soranzo, entered into a defensive alliance with Forli, Rimini, Cesena, Imola and Faenza.

Then Guido da Polenta may have remembered that Dante had distinguished himself before in diplomacy, for he sent him to Venice with other ambassadors, in the month of August, on a mission to arrange conditions of peace. The embassy does not seem to have been very successful at the time, although the war was ultimately averted.

Dante makes several allusions to Venice, but his description of the Arsenal is so vivid that it appears to bear testimony to the tradition of an earlier visit to Venice.

"Quale nel arzanà de' Viniziani
bolle l'inverno la tenace pece
a rimpalmar li lor legni non sani,
Che navicar non ponno, e in quella vece
chi fa suo legno nuovo, e chi ristoppa
le coste a quel che più viaggi fece;
Chi ribatte da proda, e chi da poppa;
altri fa remi, ed altri volge sarte;
chi terzeruolo ed artimon rintoppa. . . ."

("As in the Arsenal of the Venetians, the clammy pitch boils in winter, to caulk their damaged ships, which they cannot navigate; and instead thereof,

* *Inf.* xxi. 7.

THE PILGRIM'S GOAL

one builds his ship anew, one plugs the ribs of that which hath made many voyages ; some hammer at the prow, some at the stern ; some make oars, and some twist ropes ; one mends the jib, and one the mainsail. . . .")

This is compared to the boiling of dense pitch in the deep chasm where the barrators are plunged.

The island of the Rialto is mentioned by Cunizza in the Heaven of Venus :

" In quella parte della terra prava
Italica, che siede tra Rialto
e le fontane di Brenta e di Piava." *

("In that region of the depraved Italian land which is situate between Rialto and the springs of Brenta and Piave.") †

With his righteous indignation against any one who debased the coin, Dante does not spare a contemporary of his, Stephano Orosius, King of Rascia—the ancient name for Servia.

" E quel di Rascia
che mal ha vista il conio di Vinegia." ‡

("And he of Rascia, who in an evil hour saw the coin of Venice.")

This king, needing money for his wars, made a

* *Par.* ix. 27.

† Referring to the limits of the March of Treviso.

‡ *Par.* xix. 140.

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quantity of base Venetian grossi, which found their way into Italy, and the Venetian Senate had to pass a decree against them.

Dante, as an ambassador from Ravenna on a mission wherein failure meant ruin to his lord, has left us no record of that last journey. But we know that

“Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred
isles . . .

A ruler of the waters and their powers . . .”

his eyes beheld the splendid campanile looking down on “the golden city paved with emerald, where every pinnacle or turret glanced or glowed, overlaid with gold or bossed with jasper . . . and! around them, far as the eye could reach, still the soft moving of stainless waters . . . the ethereal strength of Alps, dreamlike, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore; and blue islands of Paduan hills poised in the golden west.”

Then, as now, there rose before him the basilica of St. Mark, with its “multitude of pillars and white domes clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, partly of gold and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster . . . and pillars and capitals . . . and above these another range of glittering pinnacles, where the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the lion of St. Mark’s . . .”*

As we may do this day, so then the poet looked

* Ruskin.

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upon the great Dominican church of San Giovanni e San Paolo, and the Franciscan monastery of Santa Maria Gloriosa . . . and many a Byzantine palace of that fair city which rose from the breadth of the silvery sea.

Villani tells us that when he "being now struck with fever, besought an escort, coasting by sea to Ravenna," the Venetians flatly refused him. But it is considered more probable that he himself chose the usual route along the coast ; threading his way amongst the shallow canals and marshy shore.

Setting forth then with Dante on his journey, first from Venice to Chioggia on that shining highway in the sea, through the lagoons which seem to stretch to the horizon on the long low sad-coloured line where the sky bends down to Malamocco, smoothly sailing onward through the level quivering waterway ; we pass inside the level stretch of island, and the "littorale di Pellestrina," and we hear the roar of the Adriatic, but only see the blue and gleamy waves beyond, where the surf breaks on the bar. At length, when Chioggia is reached, the day is drawing to a close, and the pale rippling lustre of the sea is changed of a sudden, as by enchantment, into a field of burnished gold, while the sun goes down in his glory behind the purple distance of the Euganean hills.

On the morrow at dawn, when the sea-mist lies heavy on those swampy reaches, we continue our way across the great delta of the Po, threading those shallow canals in a rude flat-bottomed boat of the primitive shape in use from time immemorial. Many a classic river do we pass, drawing near to its ocean bourne—the two mouths of Brenta, the Adige from

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the Tyrolese Alps, and the branch of the Po called the Po della Maestra—and on by shingly banks to the Isola d'Ariano, where we cross on foot to Santa Maria ; and then, now by land and now by water, we arrive ere nightfall at Mesola, the frontier town of Italy, on the right bank of the Po di Goro.

Here we may well imagine that Dante and his companions of the embassy met with a hospitable welcome from the white-robed Benedictine fathers of the rich abbey of Pomposa, whose tower was once a glory of mosaic and majolica, while within its walls tradition spoke of a fresco by Giotto.

One more day's journey lies before us, and on the third morning we set forth by land and skirt the wild sea-moor, passing the broad shallow lagunes of Comacchio with their great masses of black weed where the white sea-birds cluster. Before us lies outstretched our way, on the long sandy strip of a lurid ashen grey, which is between the Po di Volano and the Po di Primaro, enclosing the lagune from the sea, save at the one opening, the breach of Magnavacca. To the west of this stands the town of Comacchio on a long dreary island, with a ruined citadel at one end and a convent of the Capucchini at the other.

At the present time we have one more river to cross, the Lamone ; but in the days of Dante it flowed into the Po di Primario ; for the delta of the Po has changed somewhat since the Middle Ages. But far greater changes have taken place in the ancient Pineta, which once extended for many miles north and south of Ravenna. We enter at last those "arched walks of twilight groves," and passing on through the shady aisles of the silent forest, where fallen cones and

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bleached pine-needles breathe forth a fragrant odour, our way leads past the mighty tomb of Theodoric, and we enter Ravenna by the Porta Serrata.

When Dante took this journey from Venice along the marshy coast, in those first days of September, it was the most deadly season of the year, for, after the sultry heat of summer, the earliest rains of autumn would bring out the poisonous miasma—that fatal malaria to which, already in enfeebled health, he was so soon to fall a victim. He reached Ravenna only to die a few days later, on September 14, 1321, at the age of fifty-six years. Tradition says that he was buried, by his own wish, in the habit of a Franciscan friar.

These are the words of Boccaccio : “ But since his hour is assigned to every man, Dante, when already in the middle or thereabout of his fifty-sixth year, fell sick, and, in accordance with the Christian religion, received every sacrament of the Church humbly and devoutly, and reconciled himself with God by contrition for everything that, being but man, he had done against his pleasure ; and in the month of September, in the years of Christ one thousand three hundred and twenty-one, on the day whereon the exaltation of the holy cross is celebrated by the Church, not without greatest grief on the part of the aforesaid Guido, and generally all the other Ravennese citizens, he rendered up to his Creator his toil-worn spirit, the which I doubt not was received into the arms of his most noble Beatrice, with whom, in the sight of Him who is the Supreme Good, the miseries of this present life left behind, he now lives most joyously in that life the felicity of which expects no end.”

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At the last the chronicler breaks out into an impassioned cry against Florence: "Oh, ungrateful fatherland! What frenzy . . . that thou didst chase into exile, with such strange cruelty, thy dearest citizen, thy chief benefactor, thy unique poet. . . . Dead is thy Dante Alighieri in that exile which thou, envious of his worth, didst unjustly inflict upon him. Oh, shame not to be chronicled. . . . He lieth under another heaven than thine, nor need'st thou look ever to see him again save on that day . . . (of judgment).

"He lieth in company far more desirable than thou couldst give him. He lieth in Ravenna, far more venerable than thee for antiquity. . . . She is like one great sepulchre of most holy bodies, nor can any part of her be trodden without passing over ashes most reverent. . . .

"And so do thou abide with thine ingratitude, and may Ravenna, rejoicing in honours that are rightly thine, take glory to herself amongst those that are to come." *

* Boccaccio, trans. Wicksteed, p. 39 *et seq.*

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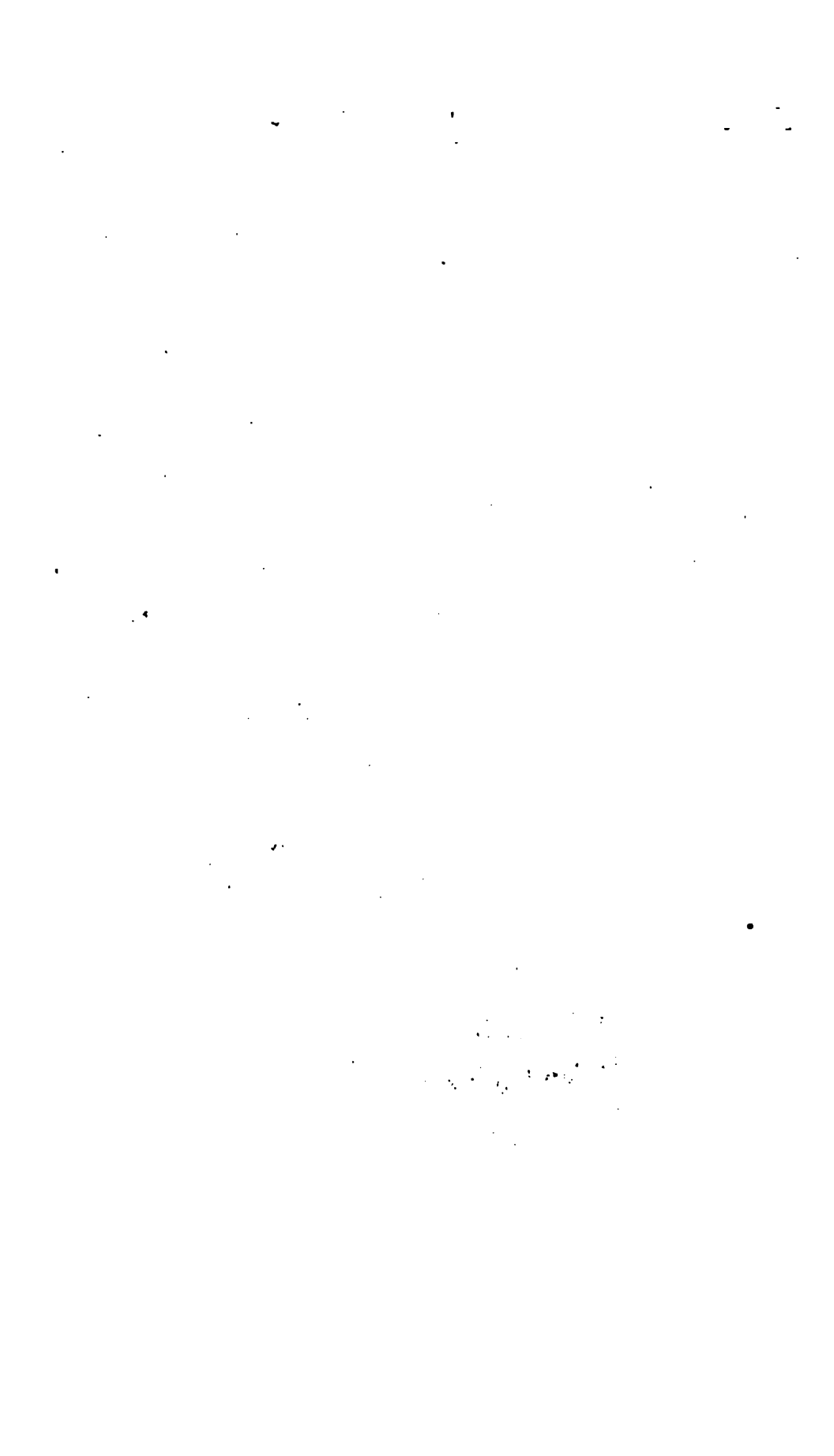
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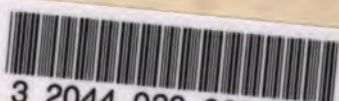
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